634 among the other ministers. The rich and important cantons
645 were entrusted to the Kamsaogo Naba, chief eunuch. This was
[839] because the emperor wanted to be sure that he would recover the fortune left by this minister at his death. Since the latter was merely the guardian of the king's wives, he had no legitimate heirs. The eunuch appointed to replace him had to establish his own personal fortunes. Only the horses or women which the late minister might have given [49] during his lifetime to persons in his section were left with their owners. [Ed., Mossi villages are
[62] divided into sections (Fr., quartier), which are really hamlets containing several households or compounds. These sections are indigenous, not colonial subdivisions.]

Powers of the Ministers over the Vassal Chiefs of the Mogho Naba

634 It would be a mistake to think that before the French occu-
645 pation the ministers had any great authority over the canton chief.
642 Actually, the ministers' role, as has been pointed out, was to act as intermediaries between the emperor and the canton chiefs. They could not, however, under any right or pretext, intervene in canton affairs, since the kombéré was the only lord in the area whose command had been conferred upon him as an appanage by the Mogho Naba.

That is why it has been possible for canton chiefs who were dissatisfied with the minister under whose rule they found themselves to report, henceforth, to another minister. Furthermore, the Mogho Naba saw no objection to this. The Mossi expression,
[538] Gansobend'ka sambiri n'tont vigri yé ("hospitality is not like kinship; you can evade it") amply illustrates the accuracy of the foregoing. If it is further noted that before the French occupation
[651] the naba came to Ouagadougou only once a year to pay their respects to the emperor and to bring him annual tribute, one will readily understand the insignificance of the ministers' authority over them.

This does not mean, of course, that it was possible to [50] do without any intermediaries, but rather that it was possible to choose them freely. In any case, one of the incentives to

Customary Payments by the Mossi to their Chiefs

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To the Mogho Naba. In former times, before the coming of the French, the kombemba (canton chiefs) [69] and the nakomsé (descendants of Mogho Naba) were all required to come to Ouagadougou once a year to pay their respects to the Mogho Naba on this occasion to present gifts to him (cattle, horses, sheep, cowries, and loads of millet).

For all practical purposes, this amounted to a fixed fee which varied in amount, of course, with the resources of the contributors (canton chiefs and nakomsé) and the number of subjects that the administration entrusted to the leaders.

Although the horses, cattle, and sheep were personally contributed by the kombéré, the cowries and millet were furnished by their Mossi subjects. The canton chief set the amounts of cowries and grain due from each village according to the number of its inhabitants.

The assessment was usually 100 cowries for a married man and 50 for a bachelor (adult). The payment in millet was 10 baskets, each averaging 40 kilograms.

Likewise, a kind of fee was paid annually to the Djiba Naba, crown price, in cowries and livestock. This was done to stay in the good graces of his father, the emperor.

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Nowadays the canton chiefs (kombemba), who come to Ouagadougou more often than formerly for important feasts and other events, never return to their lands without paying their respects to the Mogho Naba and giving him the traditional gifts (cowries and livestock). Gifts are now made more often, but they no longer have [70] the same importance. As a general rule, certain canton chiefs still require their people to give small amounts of cowries when they visit Ouagadougou for the celebration of July 14. Some chiefs, however, either because they fear penalties from the administration or because they think that their people are already heavily burdened, prefer to give the little they have personally acquired by selling produce (cotton, yams, etc.) or trading.

Some of the vassal chiefs of the Mogho Naba, who, however, are no longer subject to Ouagadougou since the division of the

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651 Mossi circle into several administrative districts, still continue to
178 make substantial annual gifts to the Mogho Naba (cowries, cattle, and a considerable amount of grain, millet and rice).

634 Payments Due the Kombemba (canton chiefs). Formerly each
651 canton held one or more ritual feasts each year, and the Mossi subjects, that is, the tengsoba (village elders, notables, and those in comfortable circumstances), regularly made gifts to the canton chief (cowries, goats, sheep, and roosters). The Peulh [Peul] gave cattle.

The canton chiefs also retained a portion of the payment made by the people for the benefit of the Mogho Naba.

[178] At the present time these traditional gifts are still made, but white or light gray roosters are more and more being substituted for livestock. [71]

661 Payments due the Ministers of the Mogho Naba. In order to
431 maintain good relations with the ministers, court officials, and
644 intermediaries between the emperor and his vassals, the canton
634 chiefs in former times used to present unspecified gifts to the high dignitaries at court when they paid their respects to the Mogho Naba. A certain number of cowries was given to the pougtiéma, first wife of the Mogho Naba (500 cowries equals two and a half francs, formerly 50 centimes).

A canton chief who has been called to Ouagadougou for some reason may choose not to call on the emperor, but he is obligated to bring cowries, a sheep, or a rooster to the minister who is head of the province in which his canton is located.

651 Common laws. (a) Regulation of market fees. Before the ar-
443 rival of the French, market fees at Ouagadougou were collected for the benefit of the Mogho Naba by a collector in his employ.

In important villages, fees were collected by Gourounsi [Grunshi] captives on behalf of the canton chiefs (kombemba).

651 (b) Hunting. In former times, before the fields were cleared
224 for seeding, the Mossi used to go out in groups of several villages
634 on hunting drives. Small game (partridges, guinea fowl, hares, etc.) were left to the hunters. On the other hand, a haunch of any quadruped killed (deer, gazelle, coba [a kind of horse antelope], etc.) was reserved for the canton chief.

651 [72] (c) Fishing. Fishing in the larger water holes could take
226 place only by authorization of the canton chiefs. The day on
634 which fishing took place was treated as a holiday. All the young men in the village and their neighbors, even if the latter did not belong to the canton, came out on the day set by the canton chief and fished for the benefit of the naba. All large fish were reserved for him, and only the small ones were left to the fishermen.

This practice still prevails.

776 Other common laws. Many deities are worshipped by the
782 Mossi. Groves, fields, mountains, etc., all have their "god."
661 It often happens that the naba (canton chief), at the behest of the soothsayers, offers an animal. This may be a sheep, a goat, or even a cow, and it is offered to one or another of the deities, either for his personal interests or for those of his people, or perhaps to ask for rain. The naba dispatches some sogoné [servitor] or samand'kamba [people of the outer courtyard] to one of the villages in his canton to find a victim. The animal is taken without its owner having any right to complain or to ask for compensation. [538] Is there not a Mossi saying to the effect, Talagh-gounda Naba'gninga the serf raises livestock for the benefit of his naba)"?

For sacrifices prescribed for the Mogho Naba, the animals are provided either by the inhabitants of the [73] town of Ouagadougou and its environs or by the canton chiefs.

Labor Service Customarily Required of the Mossi on Behalf of their Chiefs

651 Forced labor was used to cultivate the fields of the naba and to repair or construct their houses.

647 The Mogho Naba. (a) Cultivation of fields. The duty of
651 cultivating the fields of the Mogho Naba fell entirely on the Bilbalsé,
241 the residents of Bilbalogo (section of the Baloum Naba) and on all former servitors and descendants of former servitors. The Kam Naba (chief of the young men), charged with assembling the workers, had a crier announce in all the important markets that on such-and-such a day the Bilbalsé were to assemble in the emperor's

644 fields. On that day, the Mogho Naba had one or two cows
651 slaughtered and a large quantity of sagbo (millet cakes) prepared
241 for the workers. If the latter, after being assembled two or three times in the manner indicated above, were not finished with all the fields, the work was carried on by the samand'kamba (the people who dwelt in the outer courtyard of the Mogho Naba).

644 The emperor, however, received none of the millet grown in
574 his own fields, which, incidentally, did not have their present boundaries. This millet was reserved exclusively [74] for use as food for foreign visitors and for the feeding of horses (1).

1. For the ceremony of threshing this millet (kawinré), see the special chapter below [Chapter 16].

644 It was the duty of the canton chiefs and the ministers to pro-
651 vide loads of millet for the use of the Mogho Naba and his harem ("harem" should be understood to mean all young or middle-aged women, but to exclude the elderly women who have to support themselves and who have their private fields).

644 (b) Repair of the houses of the Mogho Naba. The work of
651 building and repairing the houses actually belonging to the em-
356 peror fell entirely upon the inhabitants of Bilbalogo (section of the Baloum Naba), Kamsaonghin (section of the chief eunuch), and Dapoya (section of the slaves of the Mogho Naba).

[343] The outbuildings, wédanga, four round huts with thatched roofs located outside the emperor's house, served as stables for the horses given to the Mogho Naba by canton chiefs or other personages and were built and maintained by three ministers, the Ouidi Naba, Larrhallé Naba, and Gounga Naba, with the help of the people in their sections.

The tamping of the floors and clay roofs was done wholly by the wives of the persons responsible for [75] the construction or repair, that is, the wives of the ministers and of the inhabitants of their sections.

Labor service due the province chiefs, ministers of the emperor.

651 (a) Cultivation of fields. The fields belonging to the ministers
645 of the Mogho Naba were cultivated by a system of payments in kind
241 as follows.

651 For the Baloum Naba, the work was done by all the bilbalsé.
645 The Kam Naba set the day for the sekka (gathering), and all the
241 young and able-bodied men were required to report. They received the food they required from the Baloum Naba. The number of work days was not fixed. The sekka might be held once or several times, depending on the acreage.

For the other ministers, the Ouidi Naba, Gounga Naba, and Larrhallé Naba, the field work was done by the people in their entourage (that is, the inhabitants of their respective sections) and in the neighboring villages which were formerly under their jurisdiction. Since the formation of the canton of Ouagadougou and its outskirts, the area has been under the exclusive authority of the Baloum Naba (fourth minister of the emperor).

645 If, however, the fields were so extensive that their cultiva-
476 tion could not be taken care of solely by the above system -- the
241 laborers also had to care for their own fields -- the ministers [76] called for volunteers from among the young men in the neighboring villages and paid them with food and drink. This is the sissoaga, a system commonly in use among the Mossi.

645 (b) Construction and repair of houses. As a general rule, re-
651 pair of the roofs of huts in the establishments of the province chiefs
356 was the duty of the inhabitants of their respective sections and of the neighboring villages under their jurisdiction.

651 The canton chiefs. The cultivation of the fields of the naba
634 and the repair of the huts in their establishments were wholly in-
241 cumbent on their subjects. Each village had a fixed number of
356 huts to be repaired or roofed; this is known as sough'pilli, and it is still in effect annually.

651 Today, perhaps in the interests of tranquillity, canton chiefs require labor service in their fields only from their sogoné and samand'kamba and sometimes even resort to the sissoaga.

The local administration, with respect for local customs, has the policy of organizing the system in a way that, in our opinion, will safeguard the interests of the natives, overburdened due to the negligence of the province chiefs, and at the same time will enhance the prestige of the Mossi chiefs.

653 The naba is not entitled to any other labor services. The building of dams to provide water for the villages cannot be

366 for good fortune and health. Prevent all bloodshed in this market.
782 We also fear those who are quarrelsome and those who talk too much, those who provoke disorder." The chicken is the first victim to be sacrificed, and if the offering is accepted, it must have first fallen on its back and only then turned over face downward (this means that the gods of the place will protect the naba and the persons who will frequent the market). Next the goat or sheep is killed.

The new market is opened immediately after the sacrifice. Those present buy the women's fritters. Ordinarily, Mossi markets
[443] are held every three days. The news travels rapidly that such-and-such a village has a market, and thus the business of the market gradually grows.

366 Collection of fees. It is only later on, one or even two years after the installation of his new market and when [79], it is successful, that the canton chief appoints a yaguinga (grandson, or, more
[801] accurately in native terms, a sister's son (nephew)or son's son (grandson), of the naba or of a member of his family) or a Gourounsi captive to act as collector of market fees. (We shall list below the various fees for a place in the market as they were collected for the benefit of the naba before the arrival of the French.)

366 Transfer of the market. Upon the death of a naba (the emperor, a vassal chief, or even the chief of the village where the market is held), the market is temporarily set up in another place. In large towns, such as Ouagadougou, for example, there may be as many markets as there are sections. These temporary markets are called kim'dagha (market of the kimsé, that is, of the deceased).

366 When a new naba has been named, the market is moved back
782 to its former site and the reinstallation calls for new sacrifices of fowl and livestock. That was why in 1897, when the market at Ouagadougou was being re-established, the emperor asked the captain who was in command of the post to provide a cow to be sacrificed along with a sheep and a rooster which he himself provided.

366 Likewise, whenever a hyena has run through the market (its
825 presence is discovered either by the tracks left by the animal or by
787 consulting the soothsayers), just as happens when a naba dies, the market must be moved elsewhere for a few days. It is believed that if [80] a brawl should occur after a hyena had passed through the market, there would certainly be a death.

Scale of Market Fees Collected by the Mogho Naba and the Canton Chiefs Before the French Occupation

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●651 At Ouagadougou two collectors had the duty of gathering market fees.

The Kos Naba (from kossé "to sell," and naba, "chief") collected a tax on every animal slaughtered whose meat was sold at the market.

The Ragh' Naba (from ragha, "market," and naba, "chief") collected fees on all other produce.

The fees were as follows.

Captives. 1,000 cowries per captive sold; fee paid by the seller.

Large animals. (a) Oxen, 250 cowries per ox slaughtered; cows, 250 cowries per cow slaughtered. (In addition, the hump of every head of cattle slaughtered was taken for the Mogho Naba and delivered to him that evening.)

(b) Donkeys: 200 cowries per donkey sold, paid by the seller.

(c) Horses: no tax was collected. Horses, being luxury animals and sought only by chiefs and a few [81] well-to-do persons (rakangba) were not put up for sale at the market.

Small animals. No special tax on sheep, goats, etc.

Dam (dolo, beer). No tax. The seller was supposed to present a gourd or canari of beer to the chief of her section (the emperor's minister) whenever she made some. This was called the lenga, that is, a "taste." This practice no doubt explains the lack of any tax on the beer merchants.

Cotton strips. Taxes graded from 20 to 100 cowries according to the size of the rolls of cloth.

Cotton. First collected in kind and then a tax of 20 cowries paid after the sale.

Grains and fats. Small millets, sorghum, rice, peanuts, millet that is sprouted to be used for beer, beans, and peas: for these kinds of produce, the Ragh' Naba and his assistants had special measuring devices, bowls of a sort, made of wood and used to collect payments in kind. All of the grains, including the millet used to make beer, were stored by the Ragh' Naba in granaries for disposal by the emperor.

443
651 Ready-made clothing, beads. No tax collected.

[82] Soumbala (kalgo in Mossi) [locust beans pressed into balls]. Payment in kind (one ball per seller).

Other spices. No fee paid.

Karite [shea] butter. Collected with a soutga (a kind of ladle), karite butter was used almost exclusively for the horses of the Mogho Naba.

Fritters and other cooked foods. Actually no fee was called for on these products, but the collectors demanded the payment of a tax in kind to provide their own food or that of the samand'kamba (servitors of the outer courtyard).

Salt. 300 cowries for each load (ox or donkey).

Hoes, axes. Each merchant provided a daba or an axe for work in the field of the naba. Nothing was collected at the subsequent market if all of the tools had not been sold in one day.

[306] Jewelry. No tax was collected. The jewelers who made bracelets and other jewels for the wives of the naba, as well as various harness parts, were exempt from all taxes.

Other markets. Fees collected for the benefit of the canton chiefs were about the same as [83] those paid at the market of Ouagadougou. In small markets, however, payments were made in kind. The edible products made up the food of the collectors, Gourounsi captives for the most part, who were prevented by their social status from having wives and so had no one to prepare food for them.

Chapter 5

Slavery Among the Mossi

567 We shall endeavor in the following lines to describe slavery as it existed among the Mossi before the French occupation.

567
173 We know that slavery has existed for a very long time in the land of the Mogho Naba, but, because of the total lack of dates in Mossi history -- handed down from generation to generation by the griot [heralds, drummers] of the naba -- it is difficult to determine when it was first introduced.

567 It is known, however, that the first slaves of the Mossi were all of Boussanga [Busansi] origin. The canton of Garango in what is

567 The only slaves who have remained faithful to their masters or, more exactly, who have preferred to remain in Mossi territory after their emancipation, are nearly all Gourounsi.

The Gourounsi Captives

567 727 648 [439] Sonrhaï [Songhai] forces led by Alpha Haïnon, Gazeré, and Babato used to raid Gourounsi country. They reduced a large number of Gourounsi to slavery, immediately making soldiers of the more enterprising among them to fight against their own people and selling or exchanging the rest for horses. Mossi country has always had a large supply of horses, so the Mossi used to go to Léo to trade their horses for slaves or simply to trade their slaves to the Sonrhaï for cowries.

567 648 The Sonrhaï chiefs maintained good relations with the emperor of the Mossi, Naba Sanum. That is why they spared the Gourounsi village chiefs who had taken refuge with the Mogho Naba.

Boukary-koutou, the future Naba Wobgo, enjoyed the [87] regard and friendship of the Sonrhaï since he aided them in their wars against the Gourounsi in exchange for an ample share of the booty and slaves. We have shown that the large number of Gourounsi whom he brought with him to Ouagadougou contributed mightily to his being named emperor of the Mossi.

567 651 During the reigns of Naba Koutou, Sanum, and Wobgo, there were special slave markets attached to the regular markets at Ouagadougou and other large centers. A fee of 1,000 cowries was collected for the benefit of the naba for each captive sold, regardless of sex.

567 302 787 When owners desired to sell a slave, they first shaved his head, and it was only after the hair had begun to grow again that he was taken to market. The cutting of the hair derives from a superstition among the Mossi.

Depending on where the hair starts to grow, whether well back on the head, at the forehead, or near the ears, the interpretation varies as to how the slave is to be regarded: as a dangerous being; as a lucky or unlucky influence on the family owning him.

We shall not now go into details since such beliefs will be discussed in a special section.

631 powers to his vassals, the province chiefs, who in turn entrust them to the canton chiefs, and these do likewise with the village chiefs. Thus, when a native wants to move from one canton to another, or 631 even from one village to another, he must be authorized to do so. 166 He must request the permission of the canton or village chief to settle 425 in such-and-such a place, and the chief of the village where he wants to live tells him where he may build his huts and which field he may cultivate. The naba may dispossess one of his subjects, if he so wishes, and give his field to another. After all, he "has the strength." This rarely happens, however, and a native who has cleared a piece of bush, fertilized a plot to sow maize, sowed and weeded the ground, is usually assured of a harvest, except in case of war. If a man is evicted, on the other hand, there is no appeal; neither the canton chief nor the province chief would listen to him; they would do the same thing if the opportunity arose.

421 There is no communal property. Every individual works his fields for his own account; he himself collects the fruit of his labor and remains its undisputed master. Nevertheless, every native owes his 651 chiefs and benefactors a tithe; and at harvest time it is interesting 431 to watch everyone sorting ears of maize, braiding sorghum stems, and measuring out baskets of small millet. The village chief is to get so many ears of maize; the canton chief, if he does not reside too far away, so many others; the father- or fathers-in-law will get theirs, and so will one friend or another to whom one owes cowries, or who has previously granted a favor. However, everyone who deals out goods right and left will in turn get some from various other people and approximately regain his expenditure. The village chiefs offer more sizable gifts to the canton chiefs, and the latter do likewise to the province chiefs.

651 These were, in fact, taxes, not fixed taxes per capita, but com- 661 pletely arbitrary ones. If the naba found a gift insufficient, he had no compunction about saying so, and the person involved had to comply. It is said that the naba of Koupéla paid annually 500,000 cowries (500 francs) and /23/ three horses to the naba of Bélousa, and a million cowries (1000 francs) in two installments to the Moro Naba, to whom he also gave five horses. The gifts to the Moro Naba were brought first to the naba of Bélousa and from there conveyed to Ouagadougou: ever the hierarchy.

This quasi-official tax, however, was not the only one. Whenever the Moro Naba wanted horses, cattle, or anything whatever, he

651 661 had a province chief notified, and everyone hastened to carry out his wishes. If a province chief in turn wanted something, if he was short of millet or wished to build huts, he had one or several canton chiefs notified, and these in turn advised the village chiefs; through them everything was slowly carried out, for it took time to transmit these orders, but the common man never failed to comply.

Such a system made it impossible for an individual to accumulate wealth. A surplus of goods would have aroused the naba's cupidity, and he would have found some excuse to tax this overly enterprising subject more than the others. This is why those who owned a few cows carefully concealed it by entrusting them to the Peul. The latter could not hope to increase their herds rapidly, because the nabas were always in need of fine, fat cattle for some alleged sacrifice or festivity.

651 661 431 At certain times the canton chiefs and even the village chiefs, as well as people desirous of making a good impression, must go to the naba to greet him and to present him with gifts which never amount to less than 500 cowries (50 francs). When the naba undertakes an important task, such as the building of several huts, the weeding of his field, or the harvesting of his millet, some of the people are summoned to help him, and it is proper for the others to come and offer him gifts. His convalescence from illness is an occasion for gifts also, and, if he has eluded some danger, he must quickly be congratulated and given cowries. On every festive day or on the days following, each naba must go to his province chief to greet him and to bring him gifts in proportion to the importance of his own position. Whenever the naba travels, every village where he stops must give him food and drink, and thus offer him chickens, goats, sheep, or even a cow if the village is sufficiently important. The grooms and other servants in the retinue of the naba manage for themselves at the expense of the inhabitants. This is quite a burden, especially since the naba, when he returns home, expects more greetings and cowries.

726 War was another important source of revenue. Binger describes what he witnessed at the court of Boukari-Koutou, who was later Moro Naba under the name of Naba Wobro and who was deposed by Voulet's arrival. Before leaving for war, the sorcerers were consulted and indicated the tangandé or sacred grove where a sacrifice was to be made in order to insure victory. The province chief then took out his flag, a mere staff with charms and a cow's tail hanging at

326 iron bar on an iron stump planted in the ground or on a stone. Copper
306 and zinc are smelted in small clay crucibles, the size of which varies with the desired thickness of the bracelet. The bracelet is first made in wax and coated with well-kneaded clayey earth which acquires the same shape. The wax is then removed with boiling water, and copper is poured into the clay mold. With a crude file the jewelry-maker removes the dross which clings to the metal, polishes the bracelet, and carves designs into it. The most skillful among them make attractive twisted ornaments of iron and red and yellow copper. One Ouagadougou Christian, deft at modeling wax, makes all sorts of objects, such as napkin rings, paper weights, inkwells, figurines, etc., which are not lacking in style.

484 The Mossi have always travelled a little, and they used to go quite
484 regularly to Timbuktu; now, thanks to the French peace, journeys have become increasingly frequent. The European settlers in Tenkodogo, Ouagadougou, Léo, and Koudougou hire the Mossi as house boys and
[464] take them to Ségou, sometimes to Kayes, and even to Saint-Louis. These boys, when they return, fill their friends with wonder and arouse their desire to take such great journeys also.

484 The recruitment of Black troops has also fostered this desire to see
464 new lands. Many natives have made the trip to Bandiagara to enlist as riflemen; others went to Kati, and when they found that no further enlistments were being made there, they went on to Saint-Louis.

484 During the dry season the Mossi are more often lured away by trading ventures. In October and November many young men who have managed to secure a sheep or two or a few goats and the wealthier natives who own cattle organize caravans in the hope of selling their livestock at a profit in faraway markets. In former times the Yarsé and Haoussa had a monopoly on trade. Nowadays the Mossi compete
[651 with them, for they must find money to pay taxes to the Whites, the
648] famous five-franc piece. /60/ Besides, now the roads are safe. Highway robbers are no longer to be feared, and one no longer has to pay tolls every time he enters the territory of a new chief. From this point of view, and from it alone, the French peace is valued by the natives, although they find it onerous to pay taxes, to build roads and bridges, and to pay customs duties on leaving and re-entering French territory. Is a man ever pleased when something is required of him, even for his greatest good?

491 Now only the watercourses present some difficulty when they are full. The Administration, which does all it can to facilitate trade,

651 436 457 There is proof that trade tends to grow year by year in the ease with which the natives now secure the five-franc piece needed to pay their tax. The Europeans who live among the Mossi, including all the riflemen and circle /an administrative district/ guards, do not put into circulation a quarter of the five-franc pieces which are required each year from the natives. At first the Mossi were taken by surprise and had to give 10, 000 or even 15, 000 cowries to obtain /62/ this famous coin, this charm, which was to free them from all difficulties with the Whites. At the official rate of exchange this coin is worth 5, 000 cowries. Nowadays it is very difficult to find a native willing to give this much for one of the coins. The usual exchange rate is from 3, 500 to 4, 000 cowries; French currency has depreciated. This must mean that the natives find elsewhere, through trading, this indispensable coin. They know that the tax must be paid every year, and instead of waiting until the last minute, as soon as they have accumulated the necessary cowries, they secure the five-franc pieces from those who have fetched them from afar. The coins flow in; the rate of exchange goes down.

439 567 Nowadays, trading is less active toward the north. Formerly the Mossi supplied Timbuktu, the desert regions, and even Morocco with slaves. The Gourounsi and Bousansé were frequently raided with the sole intent of obtaining slaves. The Mossi even sold each other into slavery, and prior to the French occupation a woman and even more a young girl or boy did not dare venture alone a few hundred meters from the village; they were too afraid that they might not return. It is said that the Mossi even supplied the Constantinople court with eunuchs; and when the great Cardinal Lavigerie was head of the Algerian Arab Orphanage, officers once brought him small children rescued in the desert. They were very young Mossi who had been sold in Saraféré or Timbuktu and whom our officers had found enclosed in bags carried by camels in a caravan halted by our troops. These children were raised in Malta, and they returned to Mossi country where they rendered significant services. Now the establishment of an administrative center in Kaya, near the important market of Salmatenga, will no doubt promote trade in this northern region.

439 Nowadays the trade between Ouagadougou and Tenkodogo on the one hand, and Ouahigouya (in Mossi country), Saraféré, and Timbuktu or Dori (called Gyémaré by the natives) on the other hand, amounts to very little. The Mossi export kola nuts which they have brought

4: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1957
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643 The war minister replied, "That will be against tradition and justice to the dead ruler. Do not fear; I am here with my arms to see that your decision is respected" (this was not always an empty gesture, for one man, Wobogo, forced a Ouidi-naba to elect him).[3] When the lesser ministers were notified as to the choice of the new sovereign they said: "You have expressed our will and the will of all the people." The elector then secretly called the new ruler and, taking off the man's goat's skin (the symbol of those seeking the chieftainship) told him: "I am giving you the house of your father and of your grandfather." Then the ministers and the chief musician escorted the new ruler before his subjects, and the Ouidi-naba shouted: "Here is he who has the power of life and death over you." The following day all the members of the ruling lineage and sublineages swore not to betray their new ruler. The minister of war then swore, in the name of all the people, to protect the new ruler with his life if the need ever arose. Next followed ceremonies during which a descendant of the original Ninisi inhabitants made sacrifices, in the name of the new sovereign, to his ancient ancestors.

643 642 [778] In analyzing the power of the Moro-naba we must take into consideration the concept of *nam* which is described as "power" or "the force of God." It is this force of God that enables one man to control another, and gives the sovereign the power of life and death over his subjects. Moreover, once a man had "eaten the *nam*," the Mossi constitution had no provisions for deposing him. The Mossi generally claim that only one of their thirty-three rulers was ever deposed, and that he was the ruler who ran away from the French. However, there is another tradition that states that one sovereign, Karfo, was forced to commit suicide by his Ouidi-naba.

According to the Mossi constitution, the Moro-naba had complete control over the lands of the state, and was the only one empowered to distribute these lands as fiefs. Any attack on the lands of the state was an attack on the Moro-naba and thus a cause for war. The Moro-naba alone had the right to make war, and in this he was helped by his vassals, the district chiefs, and their armies. He was court of final appeal for crimes that carried the death penalty and, theoretically, only he had the right to condemn a nobleman to death.

● 651 686 Every year the district chiefs under the command of their ministers went to the capital to pay allegiance to the Moro-naba with gifts of cows, goats, sheep, cowries, and grain. The animals were presents from the stock of the district chiefs, but the cowries and grain were collected from the villagers of the districts. The people of the several wards in the capital furnished labor for the cultivation of the sovereign's fields and for the upkeep of his houses. The Moro-naba received substantial sums of money from taxes on the sale of slaves or other merchandise in the Ouagadougou market. He also received presents of slaves when his vassals raided the surrounding countries. If a district chief failed to fulfill all of these

4: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1957
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obligations to the Moro-naba, his lands were raided, his women seized and, if he were caught, he was killed.

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It is difficult to ascertain how the institution of provincial administrators arose among the Mossi. Some of the people still believe that the ministers were formerly slaves of the Moro-naba, but Delobsom claims that the first ministers were warrior companions of Naba Oubri, the founder of the Ouagadougou dynasty.[4] These men were not members of the royal lineage and thus were inferior in status to the members of the royal lineage and sublineages under their supervision. However, as emissaries of the Moro-naba, these ministers were entitled to respect by all the people. The ministers recommended successors to vacant district chieftainships; thus it was incumbent upon a district chief to be friendly with his minister if he wished succession to go to his eldest son.

The minister was the person who carried orders from the Moro-naba to the district chiefs, and he reported back to the Moro-naba on conditions in the district he visited. However, the minister could not interfere in the internal affairs of a district, nor could the district chief complain to the Moro-naba about a minister. Everyone was required to observe the strict hierarchy; the only sanction that the district chief exercised over his minister was to appeal to another minister in the hope that the Moro-naba would come to his aid.

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The districts that comprised the provinces of the ministers were scattered around the country and were not equal in size or importance. One minister, the Baloum-naba, controlled the districts ruled over by those chiefs who were the sons of recent rulers. Another, the Kamsoro-naba, a eunuch, had control of the largest and wealthiest districts, but he, in contrast to the other ministers, was not succeeded by sons and, when he died, the Moro-naba inherited all of his property. The ministers frequently became very wealthy because they received gifts whenever their charges went to Ouagadougou to pay homage to the ruler. The people from the districts under their control provided labor for their fields and for the upkeep of their houses. The ministers also received bribes from persons seeking vacant district chieftainships.

[661] [431]

When a district chief or Kombéré died, his heirs sent a horse or a sheep with leaves on its tail to notify the ruler of the death. The Moro-naba always questioned the envoys, and when he was satisfied that his man had not met with foul play, he sent the animal to his chief minister. The Moro-naba then sent his own envoys to the late chief's house with offerings for sacrifices to their common-ancestors, and also instructed the envoys to collect the death offerings from the chief's relatives. After the funeral the eldest son of the dead chief and the other pretenders went to Ouagadougou bearing gifts to the district minister and the other important men surrounding the ruler. When the time came to name the new district chief, the Moro-naba called his ministers together and asked them: "Which one of the candidates is really capable of succeeding the late chief?"

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
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picking, the plant may be turned under and left to enrich the soil.

Apart from the co-operative cultivation of fields under the proprietorship of the lineage elder, each farmer works for himself. He aids his relatives, and they in turn assist him with his work, but the results of their communal effort are not shared. This applies not only to the work of planting but also to cultivation and harvest. The decision about what is to be planted in a particular field and how it shall be cultivated rests finally with the individual farmer.

Communal or co-operative effort is much more characteristic of the work of cultivation than of the planting period, when everyone is in a hurry to get his own seeds into the ground and requests for assistance are not welcomed. A strong note of competition is evident at this time. A man takes pride in his efficiency as a farmer, and there is a race to see who can get farthest along with his work. In the earliest phase of preparations for the approaching rainy season it is the individual's best friend upon whom he relies most for assistance. He is the first person to be called on for assistance in clearing the field for planting. If a Mossi farmer is unmarried, he may also ask the other unmarried men of his lineage for help. If a long day must be spent in the field in order to clear and clean it properly, his mother will offer the helpers the midday meal, which is carried out to them as they work.

Naba koba (chief's cultivation) is the name given to the work which the villagers do in the fields belonging to the village chief. A village elder is charged with announcing when and where work in the chief's fields is to be done, and each lineage head relays the news to his kinsmen. This contribution of labor is no longer obligatory, as it was formerly, but only a question of social pressure and recognition that individual well-being and the welfare of the village "depend on the chief."

Every Mossi is an agriculturist. Although agriculture is the principal source of income, everyone also engages in crafts, particularly during the dry season when the work in the fields is finished. However, there are no full-time crafts specialists. Even the African functionaries in the European administration and the teachers, clerks, and merchants all work in their fields part of the time during the rainy season. The activities of the blacksmiths, leather workers, butchers, wood workers, herbalists, and small merchants are carried out on a much smaller scale and are fitted into the routine established by the rains and the growth of their millet. Only elders whose age keeps them from the fields might be thought of as specialists who do not participate in agriculture, but their land is worked by younger members of the family, and they take a keen interest in the course of its cultivation. The village chief, the earth custodian, and certain other elderly and important members of the community do not cultivate; this is because of their position and age rather than because

From a political standpoint, they were subject to the high Mossi powers just like the Yarsé, but like the latter and aside from this, they had preserved all their personal and economic freedom.

Let us add a few words about the various races of livestock which are to be found in Mossi territory.

As far as cattle is concerned, there are three races in the Ouagadougou circle:

1. Humped cattle, which is found mostly in the northern and eastern parts of the circle. This beef is tall, with a short dewlap and large horns. It is well suited to porterage, and furnishes excellent butcher's meat. There are some 5,000 head of humped cattle in the circle, 2,000 males and 3,000 females.

2. Humpless or local cattle. This beef has small horns, is found chiefly in the western and southwestern regions, and is usually designated by the name of Kipirsi cattle. It is not suited to porterage and yields inferior meat, but it is much stronger than the humped beef and better adapted to the climate.

3. Ordinary cattle, the result of a cross between the two preceding species. This beef has the strength of the Kipirsi cattle and is considerably taller. It is, furthermore, capable of being fattened, and can thus furnish meat of very good quality. This type predominates among the Tenkodogo Mossi. It comprises about 20,000 head, 8,000 males and 12,000 females.

It is therefore the local cattle (71,000 head), which is most numerous. The humped beeves are worth from 40 to 100 francs, /489/ and the humpless beeves from 30 to 40 francs. The natives are familiar with castration but practice it at random on any subject that comes to hand.

Prior to the arrival of the French, the Mossi used their cattle for meat and for sacrifices, but the two uses really amounted to one (the former) since the animals offered to a dead person are always eaten by the living. Nowadays, the Mossi sell their cattle to pay their tax. They still eat meat, although apparently not as much as before. The need to pay a tax which has been understood imperfectly, raised too rapidly and levied too harshly over the past few years, has forced them to save their cattle in order to sell it on the southern kola markets.

439 We must add without further delay, however, that it is not the Mossi who do this trading but the Yarsé we know so /538/ well, and the Haoussa settled in Mossi territory. Mossi trade, therefore, is not really Mossi, or at least it was not in the past. If it has now begun to be to some extent, it is thanks to French settlement in the territory.

439 After conquering Mossi lands (1896), indeed, we levied a tax
651 on the population. This tax, low at first, rose rapidly over the last few years. In 1906 it amounted to 311,000 francs in the Ouagadougou circle itself, for a population of 861,000 inhabitants. In 1907 it rose to 366,000 francs, in 1909 to 555,000 francs, in 1910 to 656,000 francs. Furthermore, beginning in 1908, it was exacted with so much strictness and on such short notice that it was exactly as though its amount had been increased threefold. Under the circumstances, the Mossi were forced to take to trading in order
[436] to secure the French money they did not have, since the local currency is the cowrie and the French administration will not take it. They were forced to go and sell their oxen, even their cows, something the Black will only consent to do when hard pressed and in the direst need. In short, the Mossi now organize small caravans on a village basis. Local young men are sent in groups to Ouanké to
[484] sell cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys, local horses, and cotton strips. They bring back either French currency or kola nuts. When they bring nuts, they go and sell them at Saraféré or Sofara and get salt or 5-franc pieces. In other words, the Mossi are taking to trade, owing to a pressing need.

439 The Mossi, nevertheless, may hardly be regarded as a trader. He has been one for an extremely short time, and he is not much of a trader yet.

To summarize, there is a strong current of exchange trading in Mossi territory from north to south and south to north. There are also important market towns in the territory, or rather large market villages, as we already know. This exchange trading and those important markets, however, are the creation and achievement of the Yarsé and of a small number of Haoussa. The Mossi themselves, in the past, had no part in all this, except /539/ for the fact that the

565 171 were, conquerors. This represents a higher level of social complexity and development, in short, a higher level of civilization.

565 556 The nakomsé were and still are gathered in separate villages scattered throughout the territory. They did the same work as other Mossi, but prior to the French occupation they also practiced looting, which was their chief expedient, their major source of wealth. True, this manner of acquiring wealth had lent them improvident habits. Nowadays they own no more small livestock than the Mossi populace, and only a little more large livestock, while they should own much more in view of their former opportunities to acquire wealth. They immediately "ate up" what they looted, however, counting on future pillage. Nowadays they no longer loot, but they seem to have preserved their former improvident habits. It should be noted, however, that they own considerably more horses than other Mossi.

565 142 I saw at Pirigui, in January, 1909, one of those villages of chiefs' sons. There were altogether 841 inhabitants of the nobility with their families and their slaves. Those people would be interesting to study from the point of view of physical anthropology. There were faces totally at variance with Negro faces, truly distinguished physiognomies, oriental and semitic casts of features, in short, enough /579/ to strike an observer even though unfamiliar with physical anthropology.

642 The superstructure of the Mossi state thus consisted of a supreme chief, a carefully established hierarchy of chiefs, and a class of nobles to whom important privileges were granted.

● 651 As for taxes, "every year at the end of the winter season, prior to our occupation," says Moulins, "the canton chiefs had to come, greet the Moro Naba, and offer him certain gifts (beeves, sheep, millet) which constituted a sort of fixed due." This was the common tax levied after each harvest.

"In addition, whenever the sovereign needed anything whatever, he requested the province chiefs to secure it for him. They summoned the canton chiefs, who in turn gathered the village chiefs, who secured through the soukala chiefs the animals, grain, cowries, and other items requested.

[431] "Finally, whenever a native, chief or common man, came to the Moro Naba, he offered a present to the latter.

651 "Market-place dues were levied by the Dara Haba, for the sovereign's account, on the markets surrounding Ouagadougou. The Moro Naba also got the tusks of elephants and one haunch of every buffalo or koba killed by hunters."

643 651 425 "Furthermore, the right of confiscation which the sovereign could use for his own benefit without any precise rule imperatively limiting the conditions under which he could exercise it, permitted him to augment, whenever needed, the revenue derived from his usual sources.

651 "Province chiefs, in turn, had the right to demand, through the canton chiefs, whatever they needed for the support of their families and retinues. Canton chiefs held the same rights over the villages within their rule. The village chiefs themselves received from their subjects a certain number of gifts."

692 Justice was rendered as follows: /580/

1. By the family heads, aided by the family elders.
2. By the village chiefs, aided by the village elders.
3. By the canton chiefs, aided by the elders of their own quarter.
4. By the province chiefs, aided by the elders of their own quarter and by the dignitaries of their entourage.
5. By the Moro Naba, aided by his ministers and the dignitaries of his entourage.

"The respective competence /legal authority/ of those various jurisdictions," says Moulins, "were in no way clearly determined or defined. The deed and the circumstances alone were taken into account in bringing up before a certain authority a matter which the lower jurisdiction had proved unable to resolve. A matter which the family council had been unable to solve was brought before the village chief, then the canton chief, the province chief, and finally the Moro Naba.

694 "Justice was free of charge in the sense that procedural expenses were unknown, but custom demanded that a litigant should never appear before a judge empty handed. He had to offer him at least a white chicken. The outcome of a trial must often have depended on the greater or lesser generosity displayed by the respective sides."

644 Under him were the Kos Naba, who levied taxes on general merchandise sold in the markets, and the Nemdo Naba, who collected taxes on meat sold in the markets and was responsible for distributing meat within the royal household. Most of these positions were hereditary, but here primogeniture was not as important as in the ruling and administrative lineages.

The various foreign groups in the capital also sent representatives to the court. Among them were the Zangweoto Naba for the Hausa, a Naba for the Songhai, and an Imam for the Ouagadougou Moslems. Even total strangers such as the early European visitors were placed under the care of a special chief.

The most ubiquitous persons at the Mogho Naba's court were the pages, who were boys between the ages of ten and twenty. These boys were regarded as comparable to the ruler's wives, since they served him in the same manner as ordinary Mossi women serve their husbands at home. They wore women's bracelets and women's clothes, and dressed their hair in the same style as the royal wives. As we have seen, they were forbidden sexual intercourse until they were released from the royal household.[23]

173 644 The institution of pages is said to have originated sometime in the seventeenth century, during the reign of Mogho Naba Waraga. Before his reign, the wives of the Mogho Naba attended him at court. The change came during a lengthy civil war between Waraga and the chief of Riziam territory, who had refused to pay allegiance to him. During five "dry seasons" (five years) of fighting, the Mogho Naba was attended only by a small boy. He found him so efficient that at the end of the war he resolved to employ only page boys and prohibit his wives from attending him at court. This origin is conjectural. However, the use of pages effectively segregated the royal wives from court intrigues, and, once instituted, the practice spread throughout the country.

644 The Mogho Naba had little difficulty recruiting pages. Many of them were the sons of pughsiudse whom he had given to his subjects as wives. In theory, the Mogho Naba could select boys at will, but in practice the pages were usually selected by the ministers and sent to the palace. Most boys willingly accepted service, but some, often with the support of their parents, resisted confinement to the palace. Some ten-year-olds even ran away to escape their impending fate, but they were soon caught and braceleted with the insignia of their new status. Once this had been done, their lineages encouraged them to remain at the palace. Their period of service terminated when they began to "push beards," usually at about eighteen years of age. One district chief claims that ancient Mogho Nanamse used to take the sons of district chiefs as pages and release them only when their

As soon as the prince arrived, the Ouidi Naba made preparations to receive the chiefs of such local districts as Manga, Nobere, and Basgana, who visited the prince and brought him wives, livestock, and money. During a seven-day period, other chiefs and well-wishers visited the new chief and offered him gifts. When this period was over, the new Djiba Naba gave wives to the noble members of his escort and livestock, money, and kola nuts to the commoners and serfs, and sent the group back to Ouagadougou. Then he settled down to the life of a typical district chief, governing his villages in the name of the Mogho Naba, paying him tribute, and settling disputes among his villagers. Dim Delobson reports that the other district chiefs and the heads of such principalities as Boussouma and Conquizitenga formerly sent presents to the Djiba Naba when they sent their annual tribute to the Mogho Naba.[51] But this contradicts all that I heard and saw of the relationship between the royal heir and the other district chiefs. They treated him as an equal and showed no deference to him either in private or on ceremonial occasions. As a matter of fact, in the presence of the Mogho Naba, the royal heir actually effaced himself before the other district chiefs. This behavior served to preserve the concept of equal access of all members of the ruling clan to the ancestral nam. The Mogho Naba was head of the ruling group as well as political leader of the Mossi. His son, on the other hand, was often a junior in terms of age and generation within the ruling group, but politically he was on the same level as the other district chiefs. The sovereign could not show by his behavior that his son was either actually or potentially superior to the other Nanamse; nor could the prince presume to be haughty because of his strategic but accidental relationship to the actual possessor of the nam. Had he tried to do so, he might have ruined his chances of being selected to take over the "house" of his father and his father's fathers.

The relations between the Mogho Naba and his children, including his heir, were characterized by formality—at least in public. Nevertheless, the ruler took a vital interest in the training and welfare of the youthful Djiba Naba. Mogho Naba Wobogo (1890–96) reportedly had the Ouidi Naba and the Baloum Naba of Djiba executed because the Crown Prince died under strange circumstances while under their care. Yet the Mogho Naba was not expected to enjoy seeing his son and heir, because of the Mossi father's traditional anxiety regarding those individuals who would profit most from his death. At the assemblies of district chiefs called by the Mogho Naba, the royal heir was not even greeted by his father; moreover, the heir usually stood at the edge of the assembly and left without attending the customary feast. However, there is considerable evidence that the Mogho

greater number of lineage members eligible for the nam and the shallow genealogical depth. Every man who had the ability or desire to rule was encouraged to seek the post. Many candidates tried to impress the district chief and his advisers with their good qualities; most tried to bribe them. Since the candidates could not openly seek the post during the day, they visited the important officials of the district at night, taking money and cattle as presents. Some candidates even promised wives. The intrigues on this level, such as seeking the friendship of pages to find out about the activities of rivals, paralleled those at Ouagadougou. The more gifts a candidate gave the district chief, the more his rivals tried to surpass him. Consequently, the district chief often kept the office vacant for months or even as long as two or three years in order to enjoy these lucrative gifts. Neither the caretakers of the village, who complained about the administrative problems of a village without a chief, nor the Tengsobadamba, who declared that without the permission of a chief they could not make sacrifices to help the people avoid illness, drought, and steri ity, could force the Kombere Naba to name a new village chief. Only when the candidates had exhausted most of their wealth was the process to elect the chief set in motion.

The district chief had a better knowledge of the character of candidates for the village chieftainship than the Dimdambá or Mogho Nanamse had about the men whom they selected. The district chiefs were better able than other Mossi rulers to obey the dictum that only those men capable of "keeping" the country should rule. Nevertheless, before making a choice, the Kombere Naba called in the local minister responsible for the village in question and discussed with him the character and capabilities of the various candidates.[42] As on higher levels, the eldest son of the former chief was usually favored, especially if he had sent a large *fado* (death tax) to the district chief and had been generous to him during the interregnum. But it was also possible that one of the dead chief's younger sons or one of his brothers or uncles might be chosen. In some cases, the district chiefs chose men from related sub-lineages that had not held the nam for generations. One district chief chose a man who had lived away from the village for thirty years. He had gone to live in his mother's brother's village as a young man and did not return until he was named chief. Admittedly, such cases were exceptional, but they kept alive in the minds of the local people the concept of the Mossi lineage's corporate possession of the nam.

On the day chosen for the election of a village chief, all the candidates with their unshaved heads and sheepskin mantles reported to the village administrator's house along with all the other men of their lineage. They gave him presents, and he led them to the compound of the district chief.

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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Binger reports that the Mossi were divided into "a number of confederacies, more or less independent of each other, whose chiefs were vassals of Naba Sanum, the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou." He found, nevertheless, that although the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou claimed suzerainty over the Yatenga, he could not grant travelers permission to enter that territory.[3]

Crozat, who visited the Mossi in 1890, just two years after Binger, was told repeatedly that the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou had the right to control the destinies of all chiefs who claimed descent from Ouedraogo and Oubri. But he, too, found that the principalities were self-governing and mutually independent, and were united only by the weak bond that attached them all to Ouagadougou. Noting the claims of the people he encountered that Ouagadougou was still supreme, Crozat suggests that "time and circumstances have weakened this sovereignty. The ruler of Ouagadougou is regarded by the other chiefs merely as their senior and the head of their family. They seldom obey him, yet they recognize that in certain cases he has the right to give them orders." Like many Frenchmen who came after him, Crozat concludes, "One will be struck, as I have been, by this political organization in which the waning of the central authority has led to a true feudal system closely reminiscent of a certain period in our own history."[4]

Delafosse tells us that "the authority of the emperor [of Ouagadougou] does not seem to have been ignored within his borders except in very rare instances. The vassal kings, who were brothers, sons, or nephews of the emperor, usually obeyed him. In any case, the emperor did not interfere with the administration [of their territories], and required nothing from them except the payment of taxes and the raising of contingents for any expeditions he might have to organize against outside enemies (the emperors of Mali, Gao, or Segou; Moroccan pashas; etc.). In return, the emperor granted his support to those of his vassals who were unable to command the obedience of their subjects or tributaries."[5]

It appears, then, that although the independent rulers and autonomous princes sometimes recognized the supremacy (if not the seniority) of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, they were relatively free to rule as they wished. As possessors of the nam, they claimed and exercised the right to administer the peoples of their realms. It appears, furthermore, that the rulers of Ouagadougou seldom challenged the independence of their confreres in Yatenga, although the latter often disturbed them. For example, when Yatenga Naba Kango (ca. 1754–89) sacked and burned the Ouagadougou district of Yako for sheltering refugees from a civil war, the Mogho Naba did not come to the aid of the Yako Naba. Nor did he take offense when this chief, in order to regain his seat, was compelled to switch his

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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VII

THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATION

THE REVENUE for the support of the Mossi chiefs and their governmental system came from many sources in a variety of forms. The Mossi of Ouagadougou held that "the Mogho Naba is master of everything" (*Mogh Nab n so fa*), and when they referred to the control he and his chiefs exercised over their goods and services, they said, "The commoner rears his livestock for the chief," and cited the proverb "The snake gets whatever is in the belly of the frog."

Since the Mossi were, and still are, primarily an agricultural people, the products of the soil were the main source of revenue. The Mossi chiefs did not own the land, but they controlled it and assigned land rights to their subjects. The Mossi believed that land had no value apart from people, and, conversely, that people could not exist without land. As they said, "Land is the mother; it fed the ancestors of this generation; it feeds the present generation and its children; and it provides the final resting place for all men." Therefore, a Mossi chief never hesitated to give anyone permission to use unoccupied land. It was in his interest to do so, because the more subjects he commanded, the greater were his revenue and prestige. An unpopular chief was censured not by a withholding of tribute and presents, but by a mass exodus of his subjects to another area.

Through the administrative hierarchy, the common people contributed to the support of the various levels of government. The Mogho Naba periodically received agricultural produce from all his subjects. Through the village chiefs, the village people sent part of their produce to the district chiefs, who forwarded it to the provincial ministers. They, in turn, delivered it to the central government during a ceremony appropriately called "Soretasgho" ("completion of the road"). This event occurred at the end of the harvest festival, after all the crops had been gathered in.[1]

To open the ceremony, the provincial governors' retainers began to clear the paths leading from the governors' compounds to the palace, for they had

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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become overgrown with grass and weeds during the rainy season. This clearing was done to within a few yards of the palace, but was not completed. Early in the morning of the day chosen for the actual rendering of the agricultural tribute, the retainers placed baskets of produce along these paths. During the morning ceremony, the Ouidi Naba presented a basket of millet to the Mogho Naba. Then the Bendere Naba, acting as Sore Naba ("chief of the road"), signaled on his drum, and the men with baskets who were waiting on the uncleared portion of the paths, preceded by drummers and men with hoes, axes, and other tools, began to move forward. The men in the processions raised a din, shouting, singing, drumming, and pretending that the task of clearing was very difficult. From time to time, the more energetic among those who were not carrying bundles ran ahead of the others, turned somersaults, and then, going through the motions of warriors in battle, pranced back into the procession. All the processions came to the shed occupied by the royal drummers and deposited their burdens. These were later retrieved by the palace staff and stored for use in the royal household.

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The royal household was also supplied with produce grown by the royal wives. Foodstuffs for guests and fodder for the ruler's horses were provided by the people of the Bilbalgo and Dapoya wards, which were under the general supervision of the Kam Naba. Two or three times during the agricultural season, this official recruited extra help from these wards to help cultivate the fields. In recompense for this *sosogha* (work bee), the laborers were given food, drink, and kola nuts from the royal household. At the end of the year, the harvesting and threshing of the grain from the Mogho Naba's fields was the occasion for an elaborate ceremony, "Mogh Nab' kawinre" ("threshing the ruler's grain").[2]

To begin this ceremony, the Mogho Naba summoned a local earth-priest, the Manougoudougou Tengsoba, to the court. This man, a descendant of the Ninisi, had to perform the propitiatory sacrifices to the earth deity who was symbolized by the threshing floor. After the sacrifices were completed, the Kam Naba went to the threshing floor with the young men of the Bilbalgo and Dapoya wards, who threshed the millet gathered there. The next morning they all returned to the threshing floor with the Bendere Naba and his minstrels, who recited the Mogho Naba's genealogy and sang praises to his ancestors. The drummers then beat out work rhythms and traditional drum patterns to which the workers danced while scattering the millet far and wide. Finally, the dancing stopped, and the Kam Naba drew a line on the threshing floor, dividing the pile of millet in two; the Bilbalgo people gathered one half, the Dapoya people the other. Regard-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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less of the amount of millet harvested from the Mogho Naba's fields, there had to be one hundred baskets full of grain. If the number of baskets filled with the Mogho Naba's grain fell short of the mark, the serfs and slaves had to make up the difference with the produce of their own fields. The ceremony concluded with sacrifices to the royal ancestors, after which the Mogho Naba's wives, daughters, and sisters gave beer and kola nuts to the laborers.

As head of the central government, the Mogho Naba received revenue in the form of money and livestock which the district chiefs collected from the village people. These were given to him during an elaborate annual ceremony called the "Basgha" ("feast of the royal ancestors"). Several days before this post-harvest festival, the district chiefs and their retainers arrived in the capital and lodged with their provincial ministers. At a designated time during the ceremony, the district chiefs and nobles went to the palace. In provincial contingents and led by their ministers, they walked up to the sovereign's throne and gave the Mossi salute. After they had returned to their places, their servants gave the royal pages the presents they had brought to the palace.

The Dimdamba apparently made their annual contribution to the Mogho Naba at the time of the Basgha. There is one report that they took this opportunity to send gifts to the ruler's son, the Djiba Naba, as well. The Dimdamba customarily sent the Mogho Naba part of the goods they had seized in combat against non-Mossi peoples, as well as a tax (*jado*) out of the goods they had inherited from their predecessors.[8] There is also some evidence that the Mogho Naba solicited goods from the Dimdamba at other times. Crozat says:

> During my first visit to Yako, three envoys from Ouagadougou were at the chief's house. They were tax collectors. They had come to offer the vassal a silver bracelet sent by the sovereign. The Yako Naba responded by sending horses, captives, and cowries to Ouagadougou.[9]

Crozat could not understand this reciprocity between the Mogho Naba and his vassals, and questions whether the Mogho Naba really collected taxes from them. He concludes that the Mogho Naba did receive taxes, "but these are never given to him except in the form of presents which are reciprocated."[10] Crozat found it puzzling and disturbing that many of the Dimdamba had not given the Mogho Naba any "taxes" for several years. He indicated, moreover, that they did not wish to pay taxes to the Ouagadougou ruler even under the guise of an exchange of presents. This was especially true of the Yatenga Naba, who had not sent the Mogho Naba any presents for six or seven years prior to 1890. Crozat surmised that

because of this delinquency, the Mogho Naba might hesitate to come to the aid of any of his vassals if a general war broke out. It is true that the Mogho Naba did not aid the Yatenga ruler when the French arrived. But whether this was because of his failure to pay taxes, or because the French conquest of the Yatenga coincided with a civil war there, we shall probably never know. We do know that many of the Mogho Naba's vassals came to his aid when the French finally arrived at Ouagadougou. It is my opinion that the gifts exchanged between Yatenga and Ouagadougou were not "tributary," but were more in the nature of tokens of friendship between two peers.

The Mogho Naba and his provincial ministers also received revenue as a function of their judicial roles. The nature and disposition of the fines levied against legal offenders were discussed in Chapter V. The Mogho Naba's fees came in the form of the traditional gifts the litigants gave him even before their cases were tried. These gifts were never regarded as bribes, for this would have contradicted the Mossi axiom that "the truth is at Ouagadougou."

The Mogho Naba inherited all the property of the Kamsaogho Naba, and claimed all the property of district chiefs who died without close relatives. He also received inheritance taxes (fado) from the estates of deceased district chiefs. In collecting the fado, the Mogho Naba first retained the horse on which the messenger came to announce the chief's death. He reciprocated by sending envoys with cowries and animals to be offered to their common ancestors at the chief's funeral. After the funeral, the envoys claimed the dead chief's quiver of arrows to take to Ouagadougou for deposit with those of other dead chiefs. Then they demanded the fado, and jestingly told the heirs that the Mogho Naba would be satisfied with nothing less than "a thousand of everything" (*tusri bumbu ja*) the deceased had possessed: wives, slaves, horses, cows, goats, chickens, articles of clothing, and so on. The heirs pleaded poverty and jokingly gave the envoys a few old and sickly animals, old chickens, tattered pieces of clothing, etc. Eventually, they handed out the fado, which usually consisted of livestock, clothing, food, weapons, jewelry, cowries, and even slaves. Lastly, they gave the envoys the chief's ceremonial horse and presents for themselves.

The Mogho Naba and his ministers collected a considerable amount of revenue from the traders who visited Ouagadougou and the larger market towns and village markets throughout the kingdom.[4] The Mossi (especially the assimilated Yarse) were good traders, and they benefited from their country's strategic location between the Sahara and the forest regions. According to Barth, some six caravan routes crossed the country, linking

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the Niger River area to the Gold Coast and Togoland. Important stops were made at such Mossi centers as Ouagadougou, Bere, Dakay, La, Mane, Yako, and Koupela.[7] At Dori, northwest of Ouagadougou, Barth found Mossi with "their fine donkeys, which are greatly sought after." He adds that in addition,

> the people of Mossi supply this market with gabaga, or "tari" [cotton bands], as Arabs near Timbuktu call them, cotton being extremely cheap in their country, so that in the great market places of that country, especially in Kulfela [Koupela, but really at Poitenga a few miles away], an indigo-colored shirt is not worth more than from 700 to 800 [cowry] shells. . . . Besides salt, cotton strips, dyed cloth, kola nuts, corn, and asses, some copper manufactured chiefly into large drinking-vessels is also brought into the market by the people of Mossi. However, I do not think they manufacture the copper vessels themselves, but bring them from Ashanti.[8]

Dubois, one of the early visitors to Timbuktu, tells us that he saw Mossi men carrying on their traditional trade in that city. Mossi traders dealt in such diverse commodities as millet, rice, manioc, peanuts, honey, kola nuts, peppers, dried onions, tobacco, dried fish, soap, iron, antimony, lead, cotton bands, straw hats, mats, jars, pots, and calabashes. They traded these articles for needles, mirrors, beads, coral, amber, tea, coffee, perfumes, carpets, fezzes, tailored robes, and salt. What impressed Dubois most was that while the merchants from Bamako, Djenne, Sansanding, and Touat enjoyed themselves at Timbuktu, "the great town of pleasures with the freest morals in the Sudan," and spent a great deal of money in gifts to beautiful women, "the Mossi did not waste their money, and left as soon as they had finished their business."[9] On the way south, Mossi and other caravaneers picked up goods from the Yatenga and other northern Ouagadougou provinces before stopping at the capital and then proceeding to the forest regions.

It is impossible to determine the exact volume of caravan trade that passed through Mossi country, and the amount of revenue it brought to the Mossi rulers. We can get some idea of this trade, however, by examining the customs reports on goods crossing the border between Mossi country and the northern territories of the Gold Coast in the few years just following European conquest.

The official figures for 1901 and 1903 are as follows:[10]

Year	Horses	Head of Cattle	Sheep and Goats	Loaded Donkeys	Bales of Cotton Cloth
1901.....	126	3,111	18,181	2,095	236
1903.....	196	6,624	30,392	4,294	269

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439 Marc, who had the opportunity to check the volume of this trade in 1904 and 1905, estimates that about 16,000 head of cattle and 75,000 sheep and goats passed through the two customs posts in Mossi country. Furthermore, he believes that since "the Mossi also supply in part the markets of Togoland and the market at Bondoukou [Ivory Coast], one may assume a minimum annual export of 20,000 head of cattle and 100,000 sheep or goats. [M14] The import of kola nuts is at least 500 tons."[11] It is clear that this volume of trade could not have been achieved so soon after the French conquest. [651] We can only conclude that it existed prior to the coming of the Europeans, and that it brought the Mossi rulers a considerable income.

643 The Mogho Naba's officials collected taxes from all caravans that passed 651 through his capital. The caravaneers also gave the Mogho Naba important gifts, and he apparently traded with them, even if always to his own 439 profit. Binger states that Mogho Naba Sanum forced horse traders from [431] the Yatenga and Hausa merchants to sell him part of their commodities at one-hundredth the purchase price.[12] Crozat reports that Mogho Naba Wobogo

> appears to have had some business relations with white merchants who came to Salaga every dry season. He sent horses to them in exchange for silver. He claims that he had no reason to be pleased with their integrity, and that the silver they sent him contained plenty of copper. Some traders apparently came as far as Ouagadougou, bringing merchandise of German origin. There was one of them there during my stay. I was told that he was an important *marabout*, a shereef, perhaps an Arab or a Moor, for I was assured that he was very light in color. As was repeated to me several times, his relations with the king were limited to the solemn greetings on Fridays. He never entered the royal hut in spite of being an important marabout. He was at Ouagadougou for about three and one-half months, but he was compelled to return to the coast since the merchandise which he had brought was exhausted. He spoke no Mossi.[13]

439 All the caravans that passed through Mossi country were obliged to stop 651 and give presents to the district officials. Those caravaneers who tried to 634 elude taxation by going through the forest ran the risk of being attacked by local nobles, who usually confiscated their goods.

644 The Mogho Naba and the lesser chiefs had "market officials" who taxed 651 the merchants in the markets of their territories. The officials at Ouaga- dougou, the Kos Naba ("sales chief") and the Raga Naba ("market chief"), 443 were fairly rigorous in their exactions. The Kos Naba collected taxes in cowries for every cow slaughtered at the market, and also took its hump and gave it to the Nemdo Naba ("meat chief") for distribution in the royal household. He also collected taxes on every cow sold in the market, but

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did not usually tax goats and sheep. In lieu of this, he occasionally took one or two of these animals from each herd that passed through the market and sent them to the palace kitchens. Donkeys sold in the market were taxed at the rate of 200 cowries each. Horses sold to the nobility were not taxed, but those exported were.

The Raga Naba collected taxes on the other commodities sold at the market. Cotton weavers paid him according to the size of their bolts of cloth, and cotton growers paid taxes on the sales of their raw produce. The tailors and dyers paid no fixed amounts, but were asked to send clothing to the palace. Every donkey- and ox-load of salt entering the market place was taxed. The smiths were not taxed in cowries, but had to supply the Mogho Naba's wives with hoes and the palace personnel with arrowheads, spear points, and iron clubs. The jewelers also sent bracelets as presents to the ruler. There were no fixed taxes on the cereals, vegetables, and cooked food sold at the market, but each day the Raga Naba, accompanied by several pages or retainers carrying baskets, went from vendor to vendor taking several calabashes of their produce for use in the palace. In addition, the vendors of cooked food had to feed the Mogho Naba's young grooms, who were not normally fed by the palace household. The beer sellers were not formally taxed, but they contributed a substantial percentage of their beverage to palace and market personnel, who demanded the customary *lembgha* ("taste before buying") more frequently and freely than ordinary buyers.

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There is some evidence (mainly from European travelers) that the traders occasionally found the caravan and market taxes prohibitive. Binger reports that the high taxes exacted by the Mogho Naba were "one of the reasons why Ouagadougou placed second [as a market town] and Mane was the commercial capital of Mossi country." Binger himself was caught in the institutionalized gift system and wrote sarcastically: "On market day [at Ouagadougou] the receipts are good. People bring everything to the palace, whether it be millet, hoes, or peanuts, and everything is accepted. *All this giving is left to the discretion of the donors.*"[14] The italics are Binger's.

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Some of the later Mogho Nanamse appear to have obtained a great deal of revenue through the sale of slaves. Most of these slaves were captured in raids among the smaller groups surrounding Mossi territory, such as the Samo, Gurunsi, and Busansi populations. According to Mangin, Gurunsi and Busansi countries were true granaries for the Mossi, who drew upon them according to their needs.[15] In early times the Mossi chiefs utilized these slaves (*yemse*, sing. *yamba*) as agricultural workers, until Mogho

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Naba Baongo (ca. 1800–30) decided that it was more profitable to sell them.[16] Subsequent rulers, especially the two Mogho Nanamse who ruled just prior to the French conquest, sold most of their captives to passing caravans or in special sections of the larger markets. When other persons sold slaves in the market, the Raga Naba collected some 1,000 cowries on each transaction—the largest tax on any market commodity.

The Mossi rulers seem to have benefited even more from the sale of eunuchs, for they had a monopoly over them. The Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou sent some captured slaves and all recidivous thieves to Teemetenga village in Koubri district, some 13 miles south of the capital, to be operated upon.[17] So successful were the Mossi surgeons that—in contrast to specialists in other areas, who lost nine lives for every successful castration—the mortality among the Mossi was only one out of ten.[18] Some of the eunuchs furnished by the Mossi were sold as far away as Constantinople, a fact which surprised the French ambassador to Turkey who saw them there in 1900.[19]

In addition to slaves and eunuchs, the Mogho Naba kept a large number of bondsmen to provide services for him. One group, the Dapore, lived in a ward of the capital called Dapoya, and had a chief, the Dapore Naba, who was himself a Dapore. The origin of these people is obscure, but they seem to have been the children of foreign captives who were brought to Ouagadougou and placed in the ruler's service. Some of them even claimed that their ancestors had come to Ouagadougou voluntarily and had placed themselves under the care and protection of the ruler. This seems unlikely, however, since the status of these people resembles that of persons captured by Sudanese rulers and installed in special wards as serfs.[20] Some of the Dapore lived in villages of their own and cultivated fields for the Mogho Naba. Others lived in a ward of Ouagadougou, served in the palace household, and provided the royal executioners. Some were selected to serve as palace eunuchs, and placed under the charge of the Kamsaogho Naba. The Dapore were hardly ever sold unless they were convicted criminals. The Mogho Naba and his chiefs refrained from selling serfs or captives who had been born in Mossi country. However, they often claimed the sons and daughters of these people as pages or pughsiudse.

The Baglere made up the second group of bondsmen providing services for the Mogho Naba. They, too, lived in a special ward and were headed by the Baglere Naba, one of their own people. Their origin is also obscure: some of them claimed to be descended from Fulani slaves who had run away from their masters and sought asylum in Mossi country; others believed that they were the descendants of foreign captives. The Baglere

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worked for the Mogho Naba in and around the palace courtyard, and in the fields. They also kept his herds and provided him with animals from their own herds. Like the Dapore, they were seldom sold, but they often had to give their sons and daughters to the Mogho Naba.

The last group of persons who contributed their services to the Mogho Naba were the Kamboinse. Their origin is also unclear. Most of my respondents claimed that the Kamboinse and their chief first came to Ouagadougou from the direction of the Gold Coast, that they bore guns, and that they offered their services as guards to the Mogho Naba.[21] Later on, the sovereign allegedly assigned slaves to the Kamboinse unit, with the result that the entire group eventually took on a serf-like character. The Kamboinse guarded the Mogho Naba's palace and seized for him the goods of persons whom he condemned to death.

The services performed for the Mogho Naba by his pages and other youthful retainers also contributed significantly to the support of his administration. We have already seen how these young men and boys took care of his every need and functioned as important messengers within the royal household. The Mogho Naba also had control over the daughters of his serfs, whom he used to obtain revenue from aliens and subjects alike. Periodically, the Mogho Naba gave one of these girls as pughsiudga to a man, thus obligating him to render goods and services to the court. Moreover, the man had to return the eldest daughter he had by this wife to the Mogho Naba as a future pughsiudga. In this way, the sovereign had a revolving store of women through whom he could bind men to himself in a nexus of obligations, and from whom he eventually received additional women.[22]

The provincial ministers of the Ouagadougou kingdom occupied such a strategic position within the central administration that anyone rendering gifts or tribute to the Mogho Naba always gave presents to them as well. Their main source of revenue, however, came from the villages under their direct control, and from the retainers who lived in their compounds and in their wards in the capital. The economic relations between the ministers and their villages were similar to those between the district chiefs and their villages, and will be discussed below. The retainers, serfs, and slaves who served these ministers provided them with many of the services their counterparts rendered to the Mogho Naba. They kept their houses in repair and provided them with firewood and with fodder for their horses. Many of them also cultivated fields for their masters. Whenever the ministers needed extra goods or services, they called on those persons who lived in their compounds or in their wards. For example, hun-

dreds of persons lived in Ouidin, the ward of the Ouidi Naba. Some of them were related to him; others had been attracted by his wealth and by his ability to obtain wives for his charges. All of them benefited from being attached to him in one way or another, and in return helped him to augment his income.

All the district chiefs sent women to their provincial ministers to be kept as wives (and thus as agricultural workers), or to be given out as pughsiudse. The Kamsaogho Naba received more pughsiudse than the other ministers because he was in charge of the wealthier districts, and also of course distributed more. The Baloum Naba was especially favored in another respect. Each year, he was entitled to call several *seghse* (sing. *seka*; a corvée or convocation) of his former pages and their relatives to help cultivate his fields. The Ouidi Naba's sources of revenue were about the same as the Baloum Naba's. In addition, his position as chief minister enabled him to obtain numerous gifts from persons who visited Ouagadougou. Moreover, the Mogho Naba often gave him horses from the fado of deceased district chiefs. The Larhalle Naba had full ministerial privileges, and a few other means of obtaining revenue. He was allowed, for instance, to keep the animals that had not been sacrificed on the graves of deceased rulers.

The provincial ministers received many goods and services from the district chiefs of their provinces. Whenever one of these ministers sent a messenger to the district, the chief gave the messenger money and livestock for his master. Furthermore, the district chiefs brought presents for their minister when they paid their annual visit to Ouagadougou to render homage to the Mogho Naba. The provincial ministers used their position as confidants and advisers to obtain as many presents as possible from persons who came to Ouagadougou to ask special favors from the Mogho Naba, to participate in judicial proceedings, or to seek the nam. Moreover, they cooperated with each other in these exactions, so that a person seeking a favor from or through one minister was prudently advised to give presents to or to seek the aid of the others.

The district chief played a key role in the procurement of revenue for the central administration, and derived an income for himself in the process. The seignorial rights over the Mossi people delegated by the Mogho Naba to all nam holders were quite obvious on this level. The district chief had rights to all valuable fruit trees, such as locust-bean and shea-butter, that grew within the boundaries of his territory. He instructed the village chiefs to harvest the fruit of these trees and send it to him. The village chiefs even had to send him the wood from the fallen branches of these trees.

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The district chiefs did not often exercise their rights over fruit trees in the weogho, as the wasteland in their districts was called. If a villager went into the weogho and collected fruit or wood from the chief's trees, he surrendered only part of it to the chief. On the other hand, if he received permission from a district chief to farm in the weogho, he was obliged to gather and send to the chief the fruit on any valuable trees. A district chief sometimes granted the rights over certain fruit trees in the inhabited areas to specific families or individuals, for personal reasons or as a reward for services. In such cases, the chief forfeited his rights to these trees, but retained his rights to the others.[25]

District chiefs also controlled all the resources of creeks and pools within their jurisdiction that were not sacred to certain aboriginal families, or which had not been transferred to specific persons. The aboriginal Ninisi families always notified the district chief when they planned to perform their annual fishing rite to the earth deities. He, in turn, sent representatives to the ceremony, and they were given part of the catch as his share. Persons who were granted permission to fish in the chief's water holes gave him a substantial part of their catch, and even those persons who had private control of fishing places regularly did the same.

The district chiefs also had rights to certain parts of animals caught in their territories. This applied especially to animals caught with such traditional weapons as traps, clubs, bows and arrows, and spears. Men who had obtained flint guns and other firearms from the Ashanti or elsewhere and who had bought their own powder were not obliged to give the chief a part of their game, but it was always prudent to do so. According to a long-standing tradition, the tusk and legs of a slain elephant that were not resting on the ground belonged to the chief, and those that lay on the ground belonged to the Tengsoba in whose ritual jurisdiction the animal had been slain. But the district chief's secular power was so much stronger than the Tengsoba's sacred power that he usually took both tusks, leaving the Tengsoba only two legs. The district chief also received other portions of elephants and parts of all the larger animals killed in his territory. And when hunters in the district were successful in the chase, they usually gave him entire small animals.

Every village in a district contributed to the district chief's revenue by performing special services for him. Certain villages were responsible for keeping specific huts in his compound in good condition; others, whose lands bordered on the woods, had to provide firewood for his compound; and yet others furnished grass and other fodder for his horses. Many villages had the task of cultivating special fields and crops for the district chief.

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For example, the villagers of Barkago traditionally cultivated and harvested a field of millet behind his compound for the chief. The people of Pinse, Donse, Passingtenga, and Tewarka cultivated millet for him in their own villages, and those of Togose and Basbedo cultivated rice for him in their excellent lowlands.

The district chief had fields both behind his compound and in the bush, which were cultivated for him by his retainers, serfs, and slaves. More than the Mogho Naba and the provincial ministers, the district chief believed that a Moaga must perform agricultural work during the planting season; to show his interest in farming, he often personally supervised the work on his plantations. When the task of weeding or harvesting proved too much for his own people, he asked his villages for a *sosogha*. On that day, each village chief, accompanied by his men, went to the district chief's fields, where, to the accompaniment of drums and chants and with the verbal encouragement of district administrators, the villages vied with each other in their task. The district chief usually sat under a tree and watched the proceedings and occasionally visited the various contingents to observe the progress made. Toward evening, the chief's wives gave the workers large quantities of food and drink in compensation for their services.

Like the Mogho Naba, the district chief had officials who collected taxes on commodities sold in local markets. These district market officials were usually serfs, Gurunsi captives, or bondsmen from other populations. Mossi rarely served in such capacities because many of the local market places were considered ritually dangerous, and their titular deities, the Tengkouga, were believed to wreak vengeance on market officials who were tardy with sacrifices. The local Kos Naba supervised the slaughtering of every animal killed in the market, kept its skin so that its ownership could be verified if necessary, and collected taxes from the butchers in the form of meat or cowries. The Raga Naba of the district was not as strict as his counterpart in Ouagadougou, and seldom imposed formal taxes on the traders. He usually walked around the market, trailed by the chief's servants, and seized calabashes of grain and other commodities, which he placed in the servants' baskets. The Raga Naba did not tax those itinerant traders or caravaneers who visited the markets in the district, nor did he interfere with them in any other way. These merchants usually had business and personal relations with the chief, and he himself handled revenue from this source. The merchants gave him goods from the forest and Sahara regions, and he in turn often gave them wives, who were thus taken out of the district.

The Mossi district chief was always on the lookout for new sources of revenue, and thus welcomed strangers into his district because they "in-

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creased his force" and ultimately added to his income. Men who had been compelled to flee from other districts because of crimes or power struggles were granted refuge and given pughsiudse. In this manner, the district chief, like the Mogho Naba, established seignorial rights over his new subjects, incorporated them into the district, and obtained goods and services from them. The better a district chief's reputation, the greater the number of refugees who sought shelter with him and added to his wealth. Conversely, a chief who was known for his injustice, his rascality, and his excessive demands from persons seeking the village nam was shunned by potential subjects and might even be deserted by his own.

Those persons who visited the district chief's compound to settle court cases also contributed to his revenue. When the case dealt with cattle or other livestock, the chief received a few animals. In other cases, he received only the customary gifts from the litigants. He also received gifts from all the families in his district several times a year. One occasion was the "Tense," a festival in honor of the mother of Mogho Naba Oubri, the founder of the Ouagadougou dynasty; the other was the Basgha. During these two ceremonies every village chief, preceded by his district administrator and followed by his subjects, paid homage to the district chief and gave him presents. The district chief retained part of what he received for the upkeep of his household and to fulfill such obligations as hospitality to travelers, and added the remainder to his own annual tribute to the Mogho Naba.

The manner in which the district chief collected his annual tax or tribute for the Mogho Naba is the subject of controversy. Several of my respondents declared that the collection of this tribute was rather informal. The district chief allegedly notified the village chiefs that he wished to give a present to the Mogho Naba, and these chiefs sent word to the family heads, who, in turn, notified every household. The village people then collected chickens and livestock, baskets of grain, and cowries, and sent them up through the hierarchy to the district chief. The district chief's retainers checked the gifts from each village very carefully, and if some villages gave less than was expected of them, the district chief summoned their chiefs for explanations. In most cases the district chief knew exactly how much could be expected of his subjects, because his informers—usually his own pages and courtyard servants, or messengers of the local administrators—kept him informed of the wealth of each hamlet. Usually, a village chief who had withheld too much from the commodities turned over to him, or who had not demanded sufficient goods from his villagers, sought to make amends. It was in his interest to do so, since it was always dangerous to incur the

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district chief's wrath. Thus, there was some method in the collection of this tribute and certain expectations had to be met, even though many of the contributors may have felt that their gifts were voluntary.

In direct contrast, Dim Delobson, himself a chief, states that Mossi chiefs demanded a stipulated amount from their villagers. He adds, however, that the tribute "varied in amount according to the resources of the contributors," and that the district chief set the "amount of cowries and grain due from each village in accordance with the number of its inhabitants."[24] According to him, the rate of assessment was usually 100 cowries for a married man and 50 for an adult bachelor (apparently, this difference was an acknowledgment of the woman's contribution to her husband's wealth). In addition, each adult male was assessed 10 baskets of millet of about 100 pounds each. Dim Delobson adds that to these exactions the district chief added his own contributions to the Mogho Naba, usually in the form of cattle.

It seems that Dim Delobson rationalized and regularized a rather informal system of contributions. The present-day Mossi declare that soil differences in the villages and variations in rainfall prevented a district chief from demanding a set tribute, because no one could tell whether a crop would be good or bad. Only a ruler's informers could tell him how much he should receive each year, and the chief based his exactions on this report. Several of my respondents agreed with Dim Delobson that the district chief provided mostly cattle for the annual tribute to the Mogho Naba, and that the village people furnished cowries, small animals, and grain.

A district chief was seldom wealthy, because he always had to use his revenue to fulfill unexpected obligations toward his subjects, his superiors in the political hierarchy, and his household. He had to be generous to his subjects, providing millet water, millet beer, and the more expensive imported kola nuts for those who visited and conferred with him daily. He was expected to provide food and shelter for the countless strangers who settled in his district, until they could provide for themselves. He also lodged and fed the messengers who brought him orders from the capital, and gave them gifts to take back to the provincial ministers. And he had to provide goods for the many members of his family who depended upon him. Finally, in the event of crop failure or famine in any of his villages, he had to provide grain from his granaries to feed the hungry. "How could he do otherwise? Was he not a 'father' to his people?"

The expectation that the district chief should provide hospitality to his subjects was so strong that those chiefs or princes who were deprived of an income for any reason often resorted to banditry to fulfil their obliga-

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tions. Binger, who found Boukary Koutou (the future Mogho Naba Wobogo) living in exile for having led a rebellion against his brother, Mogho Naba Sanum, tells us:

> Boukary has no resources, and does not even have the advantage of receiving periodic tribute from several large villages. In order to subsist and to maintain a certain status, he is compelled to live by pillage and even by brigandage. From time to time, his horsemen make incursions into the outskirts of some Gurunsi or Kipirsi village, and carry off by surprise the inhabitants whom they find working the fields or looking for wood. His people also hide and lie in wait along the roads to capture any persons who may pass within their range. This type of behavior has given Boukary Naba a bad reputation. However, the people who understand his position forgive him, knowing the situation in which his brother has placed him. And, in spite of all this, he has numerous partisans, and many others who would be happy to see him gain power.[25]

Those district chiefs or princes who wished to retain their power legitimately were forced to be generous or run the risk of losing the allegiance and good will of their villagers, who were their ultimate supporters.

It is very difficult to generalize about the amount of revenue collected by a village chief. He did not receive any revenue from the land used by his villagers. He treated the weogho in his village in the same manner as the district chief. If some families grew too large and wanted to establish permanent residence in the village bush, they asked the chief for permission to settle there. However, many village chiefs had special areas of waste for their own use. They had usually received them as gifts from some district chief, and therefore had the right to collect tribute on any crops, firewood, or fish obtained from these lands.

The average village chief's main source of revenue was derived from the agricultural and other labor of his wives and relatives. A village chief received a number of wives from his subjects and from aliens living in his village. These women helped cultivate his fields. If their labor was insufficient he called a sosogha, to which he often invited his wives' relatives. Some chiefs also had serfs and slaves who helped cultivate their land and kept their cattle as well.

The village chief did not have the power to tax his subjects. Instead, he functioned as a channel through which commodities and services passed up the hierarchy and on to Ouagadougou. Many villagers voluntarily helped the chief to repair his huts and compound walls and to cut thatch for his roofs. Many gave him baskets of grain and other vegetable products after the harvest. They also visited him and gave him presents during the annual rites to his ancestors. In contrast to higher chiefs, however, the village head

did not derive any revenue from his judicial functions. He could not levy a fine against any malefactor. However, his intermediary position between the villagers and the district chief did permit him to obtain some revenue whenever commodities moved from one level to the other.

The officials who administered the villages for the district chief received part of their revenue from the villages under their charge. These local administrators had no courts or retainers comparable to those at the provincial level. However, they did have a large number of wives who contributed valuable agricultural labor. These administrators were permitted to ask the village chiefs for sosose on their own fields several times during the planting season, but—unlike the district chiefs—they were not permitted to have the villagers cultivate special fields for them. In return for any help received, they had to provide food and drink for the workers.

The administrator received most of his revenue as a by-product of active duty in the villages. When he visited a village or transmitted a message to a village chief, he almost invariably received a sheep, a goat, a chicken, or some millet, from the village chief. He also acquired large quantities of goods during the village interregnum: he received gifts from the chief's heirs during the chief's funeral; he received additional presents when they took the fado to the district chief; he could prolong the interregnum in order to receive as many bribes as possible from contenders for the nam; and he was handsomely rewarded when the candidate he had backed was finally installed in office.

The extended family was the basic socio-economic unit supporting the Mossi political organization. The Yirisoba received land rights in his saka from his Sakakasma, who had obtained his rights from the village chief. An extended family in need of additional land would seek help from its Sakakasma or its Boodkasma. When the family no longer needed this land, it reverted to the lineage. If all the land granted to the lineage was already occupied, the extended family, through its lineage head, asked the village chief for more land. The chief usually granted this request, unless he had no more weogho available. In this case, the needy Yirisoba sometimes tried to borrow land from his non-kin neighbors. Such a step was not undertaken lightly, however. If a man borrowed land from his own lineage members or from the chief, the land rights reverted to its donors without difficulty. However, if he borrowed land from another lineage and either he or his benefactor died without assuring the return of the land, litigation often ensued. In some cases a man would seek land from his lineage brothers in another village, who let him use some of their land with their chief's permission. Some Yirisobadamba even asked their district chief for

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laborers.[3] In desperation, the French sought help from those very chiefs whose power they wished to curb, especially from the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, whom they regarded as the supreme ruler of the Mossi. However, they met with the same resistance:

> The king of the Mossi, Kouka Naba [Mogho Naba Sighiri], is lavish with vows of devotion and fidelity, but these vows are never translated into action. It is impossible to obtain from him any pertinent information about the country—he tries to give the impression that he knows nothing about it—or any information about Boukary Koutou [then in exile, but still a threat to the French], of whom he pretends to have no news.[4]

One cannot tell whether the Mogho Naba knew about Boukary Koutou's activities, but it is highly unlikely that he could have given the French much information about the country even if he had wished to do so. No Mogho Naba ever possessed this kind of information. The Dimdamba and the Kombemba paid allegiance and tribute to their superior ruler, but did not furnish him with specific data on their principalities and districts.

The death of Mogho Naba Sighiri in 1905 enabled the French officials to secure the election of a Mogho Naba they could control and to change the Mossi political organization. Sighiri's principal heir was his sixteen-year-old son, Saidou Congo, who in the opinion of the Mossi electoral college "could not keep the country" because of his youth. The French, keenly aware that they could more easily control a young ruler, insisted that Saidou be given the nam, and he became Mogho Naba Kom. Two years later, in 1907, the French began to reorganize the kingdom of Ouagadougou and the surrounding territories. They suppressed certain districts and principalities, enlarged some, and unified others by granting them control over the smaller political entities that lay near or within their boundaries. These changes were often made without regard for the traditional hierarchies, and many district chiefs found themselves controlling other district chiefs, while Dimdamba were reduced to the level of district chiefs.

The French also reorganized the provincial administration, replacing the five ministers with persons more favorably disposed toward their rule. The Larhalle Naba was replaced in 1908 after he had mysteriously left the capital for Koudougou. The Kamsaogho Naba was deposed by the Mogho Naba, and was replaced by a nominee of the French. As in the case of the district chiefs, the French shifted the territorial responsibilities of these ministers "without taking into consideration the hierarchy prevailing among [them]. The intention of the administration apparently was to reward certain young and capable ministers to the detriment of those who were old."[5] One commentator concludes: "In view of the youth of the

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reigning king, Naba Kom, and also owing to certain difficulties, the administration was compelled to grant more authority to the five great ministers and to make them true provincial chiefs with whom it could deal and who would govern their territories directly."[8]

Some of the demoted chiefs and their followers opposed these changes. In 1910, they refused to pay taxes and fought the police. However, they were forced to accept the changes when the police burned their villages, seized their goods and animals to pay the taxes, and deposed uncooperative chiefs. These harsh measures so shocked the Mossi that they remained docile from that time onward, and thereafter the French were able to rule the country with one European administrator for every 60,000 Mossi.[9]

Once the French officials had put down the opposition to their policies of control and had succeeded in installing loyal provincial administrators, they sought to bring Mossi country into the political structure they were creating in West Africa. In 1895, they had installed a Governor-General at Dakar to represent the French Government in the territories of Senegal, the French Sudan, French Guinea, and the Ivory Coast. With the subsequent conquest of Mossi country and other areas, however, this arrangement became obsolete, and a decree was passed in October 1899, dividing the French Sudan in two. One half was attached to the coastal colonies. The other half was combined with the Voltaic region (which included Mossi country), declared a military territory, and placed under the direct control of the Governor-General. In 1900 Niger was also made into a military territory, and two years later, by a decree of October 1902, a new territory called Sénégambie-Niger was set up which included Mossi country. This new arrangement lasted only two years. It was superseded by a decree of October 1904 dismembering Sénégambie-Niger and creating, among others, a territory called Haut-Sénégal et Niger, which included Mossi country. This new colony was similar to the others in that it had its own administration (at Bamako), its own budget, and a Lieutenant-Governor responsible to the Governor-General at Dakar. The territory was divided into administrative units called *cercles*, each with a commander responsible to the Lieutenant-Governor. Each cercle commander was assisted by adjutants who served in smaller units called *subdivisions* and *postes*. Mossi country itself was divided into three cercles: Ouagadougou (including Tenkodogo), Ouahigouya (including Yatenga), and Fada-N'-Gourma. This territorial change was the last to affect the Mossi until the end of World War I.[8]

The implementation of full colonial rule among the Mossi was to have a profound effect on their traditional political organization and on the

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relationship between the people and their chiefs. One of the principal contributing factors was the demand of the French administration that Mossi country not only share in the over-all development of French West Africa, but pay for its own administration as well. The resources of Mossi country were largely limited to agricultural production and stock raising, however, and revenue from these activities was slight. The full weight of administrative expenses thus fell on the Mossi people. Apparently, the first taxation was of a collective nature, for according to the official government report for June 1899, "No regular tax has been levied, but taxes have been collected from the Mogho Naba and the other chiefs."[9]

Decrees of July and November, 1903, authorized "native chiefs to collect taxes, and granted them a commission on the tax yield to arouse their interest in the regular payment of taxes."[10] Accustomed as they were to giving taxes (gifts) to their rulers with the knowledge that subordinate chiefs would extract a share before sending the remainder up the hierarchy, the Mossi were not averse to paying taxes through their traditional rulers to the "new chiefs," the French administration. However, when taxes grew to excessive proportions and chiefs continued to get a percentage, the people accused their rulers of cheating them. The reasons for the Mossi complaints about taxation are described by Tauxier, himself an administrator:

> This tax, light at first, has grown rapidly over the last few years. In 1906 it was 311,000 francs for the territory of Ouagadougou, which had a population of 861,000 inhabitants. In 1907, the tax was raised to 360,000 francs; in 1909, to 555,000 francs; and in 1910, to 656,000 francs. Furthermore, from 1908 onward this tax was exacted with such rigor and on such short notice that it was exactly as though the amount had been tripled. Under the circumstances, the Mossi were compelled to resort to trade in order to obtain the French money they did not have, since the local currency is the cowry and the French administration does not wish to receive it. . . . To meet this difficult situation the Mossi now organize small caravans in the villages, and send the young men to Wanke to sell cattle, sheep, goats, asses, horses, and bolts of cotton. They bring back with them either French money or kola nuts.[11]

Many Mossi had a great deal of difficulty in securing French currency. Mangin, a White Father who arrived in Mossi country in 1904, writes:

> The Europeans who live among the Mossi, including all the riflemen and cercle guards, do not put into circulation a quarter of the five-franc pieces that are required each year from the natives. At first the Mossi were taken by surprise and had to give 10,000 or even 15,000 cowries to obtain this famous coin, this charm which was to free them from all difficulties with the white man. At the official rate of exchange this coin is worth 5,000 cowries.[12]

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What Mangin referred to euphemistically as "difficulties with the white man" was, to the Mossi, rather drastic punishment for non-payment of taxes. If a man refused to pay his taxes, the Mossi chief was permitted to sequester his goods and sell them. If the man had neither the taxes nor the goods, the chief had to send him and his wife (or wives) to the administrative post to be punished. Sometimes, a man and his wife would be made to look at the sun from sunrise to sunset while intoning the prayer *Ouennam co mam ligidi* ("God, give me money"). Other times, a man would be made to run around the administrative post with his wife on his back; if he had several wives, he had to take each one in turn. Then his wife or wives had to carry him around. The Mossi claim that a man had to run around the post three times, and his wife four. This is probably an exaggeration, however, because the numbers 3 and 4 are symbolically associated with men and women, respectively.

A further source of difficulty for the Mossi chiefs, and one which became more serious as time went by, was that they were charged by the administration to recruit men for both labor and military service. Initially, the chiefs had to supply men to transport grain for the French-organized agricultural societies from one region to another; later, they were commanded to supply labor for private and public works. Labouret states:

> The initial recruitment, which took place in 1912, was carried out without any difficulty, thanks to the unexpected afflux of volunteers. This was not the case in subsequent years. The reason for this was that the credulous natives of these distant regions, lacking any contact with the world, believed that the Europeans were carrying off their most robust youths to sell them to the Men of the Sea [mythical cannibalistic beings].[13]

The Mossi were alarmed at the high rate of mortality among the young men who went away to work. They had a saying, *Nansara toumde di Mossi* ("White man's work eats [kills] people"), and resisted the recruitment attempts of their chiefs. There was, however, less opposition to recruitment for military service, owing in part to the Mossi tradition of warfare. Many Mossi youths served in France during World War I, and additional hundreds served in an African contingent recruited "by an administrator named d'Arboussier, and with the cooperation of the Mogho Naba, to take possession of northern Togoland."[14]

The manner in which the Mossi chiefs administered their territories before the First World War was conditioned by the colonial administrators even when it was not directly controlled by them. The Mogho Naba had gradually lost most of his power, and he had no authority to act without the specific authorization of the French. He retained most of his cere-

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their younger sons to become Moslems, and soon abandoned their active resistance to Islam.

Hesling did not permit the Mossi chiefs to revive their traditional religio-political rituals and ceremonies such as the Tense, but he continued to tolerate the Basgha. The French banned the Mossi market chiefs, because they believed (with some justification) that these officials used their offices to procure revenue for the chiefs. The difficulty was that the market chiefs were also responsible for arranging sacrifices to the market deities, which in the absence of such sacrifices would not protect the people from quarrels and violence in the market place. Some chiefs covertly retained their market chiefs; others obeyed the administration and remained anxious over the behavior of their subjects in the market. In general, however, most Mossi chiefs tried to adjust to the religious changes that were taking place, and sought to maintain at least surface amicability with all religious groups. Commenting upon the behavior of the Mogho Naba in this regard, Dim Delobson states:

> The Mogho Naba, above all, is a believer in animism like all his subjects, and it is hard to understand how he manages to reconcile his fetishism with the complex dogmas of Islam and with the many interdictions of Christianity. However, the Mogho Naba is quite capable of being a Catholic or a Moslem on appropriate occasions, while at the same time respecting the traditions of his ancestors. Thus, when the Christians are celebrating Christmas, the emperor of the Mossi devoutly attends midnight Mass. Nevertheless, he wears his fez [really the bonnet which is the symbol of his office], just as the bishop wears his miter. He likewise embraces Islam for the three Moslem festivals.[47]

Hesling failed in his attempt to develop the Upper Volta as a viable colony, and many of the chiefs whom he had used as his auxiliaries lost not only a great deal of power but also a great deal of prestige in the eyes of their subjects because of the role they had played vis-à-vis the administration. By 1929 the economy of the Upper Volta was in poor condition: cotton production had declined; taxes (raised from 5,800,000 francs in 1921 to 18,274,000 francs in 1927 and scheduled to be raised to 26,400,000 francs in 1930) were unbearable; many of the roads that were too extensive, too little used, and too difficult to maintain had been abandoned; and more than 46,000 laborers who had worked in the cotton fields and on the roads had fled to the neighboring Gold Coast.[48] The Colonial Minister, Sarraut, ordered that the colony of the Upper Volta be dismembered. He states in his decree of September 1932 that the suppression of the Upper Volta "would permit appreciable savings, and would make the adminis-

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official, M. Louveau, to relieve the Mossi of excessive prestations and taxation. Louveau cut taxes from 33,000,000 to 24,000,000 francs, a decision which, according to Burthe d'Annelet,

> forward-looking as it was, represented only an amelioration of the past situation. In effect, the natives had exhausted all their reserves, sold their animals dirt cheap, and could not pay their taxes in an honest manner. This represents quite clearly an abuse of taxation. One must conclude from these facts that taxes had been raised too rapidly, and that these excesses had long surpassed the resources of the natives, even though it is the present depression that brings this out.[52]

The administration continued to require the Mossi chiefs to supply laborers, but found that many potential workers were leaving for the Gold Coast instead.

Despite the fact that Abidjan, the capital of the Ivory Coast, is far removed from Mossi country, the administration of the Ivory Coast hesitated at first to maintain an administrative center in Ouagadougou or to return to the Mossi chiefs any of their lost authority for administrative purposes. The situation had become so chaotic by the mid-1930's that Pierre Boisson, the Governor-General of French West Africa, issued a decree making the Ouagadougou region part of an administrative unit called the Upper Ivory Coast. He says:

> In acting thus we wish, on the one hand, to facilitate relations between the Upper and Lower Ivory Coast, and, on the other hand, to ensure for the Mossi population an effective representation of their particular interests, which do not always coincide with those of their neighbors. It also seems to us that in order to ensure this simultaneous liaison and separation, the Governor of the Ivory Coast ought to be seconded by a delegate in Mossi country who would be responsible for coordinating the local interests of [the Mossi] with the general interests of the colony.[53]

Boisson was under increasing pressure from such officials as Delavignette and Labouret to improve the administration of his territories, but when World War II broke out all plans for reform had to be shelved.[54]

The Mossi chiefs, especially the Mogho Naba, swiftly came to the support of France in her hour of need, and several thousand Mossi and other Voltaics were sent to the lines as soon as war broke out. According to Balima:

> In 1940, the old and popular Mogho Naba Kom II, shocked by the spectacle of the French disaster, . . . took his two eldest sons by the hand and declared to the Mossi people in the presence of General Barraud, senior commander of the troops: "Here are my two sons, my eldest sons, to fight for France." Soon afterward this French general was able to recruit more than

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stock against marauding beasts and thieves. All caravaneers had to pay a tax to the local chiefs to cross their borders or to stop in their markets to trade. Binger reported that the caravans which passed through the market center of Wagadougou had to give the Moro Naba a share of their merchandise, aside from the presents which they gave to him. He also reported that the horse traders from the Yatenga, in the north of Mossi country, and the Hausa caravaneers, were sometimes forced to sell part of their wares to the Moro Naba at one-hundredth the purchase price (Binger 1892 : II, 292–300). Not all the caravaneers submitted to extortion, however, and at one period many of them traded with Mane instead of passing through Wagadougou where the tariffs were too high. On the other hand, the Mossi chiefs did not tolerate any trespassing on their territories by caravans that did not pay taxes. Those who tried to avoid doing so were subjected to attack by the mounted nobles *(nakomice)* on behalf of the district chiefs. Wise caravan leaders not only paid their taxes but established close relationships with the chiefs in order to receive adequate protection from some nobles who illegally attacked and looted the caravans.

It is impossible to know the actual volume of caravan trade which passed through Mossi country, but we can get a fairly good idea of it by examining the customs reports on goods crossing the border between Mossi country and the northern territories of the Gold Coast in the few years just following European conquest.[6] For 1901 and 1903 the official figures were:

TABLE 28A
Mossi Trade (1901–3)

Year	*Horses*	*Cattle*	*Sheep and Goats*	*Loaded Donkeys*	*Bales of Cotton Cloth*
1901	126	3,111	18,181	2,095	236
1903	196	6,624	30,892	4,294	369

Lucien Marc, who had the opportunity to check the volume of this trade for 1904 and 1905, guessed that about 16,000 cattle and 75,000 sheep and goats passed through the customs post in Mossi country. Furthermore, he believed that since

> ... the Mossi also supply in part the markets of Togoland and the market at Bondoukou [Ivory Coast], one can estimate at least an annual export of 20,000 cattle and 100,000 sheep or goats. The import of kola nuts is at least 500 tons. (Marc 1909 : 178)

(6) Great Britain Parliamentary Papers: Cd. 788–27, no. 357, Northern territories of Gold Coast, report of 1901 in Acc. and Papers, vol. LXIV 1902. Cd. 2238–6, no. 429, N.Ts of Gold Coast, report of 1903 in Acc. and Papers, 1904, and 1905, vol. LI.

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It is clear that the volume of this trade could not have been enlarged since the French conquest which, as we know, had disrupted Mossi society. Therefore our conclusion must be that it must have existed prior to the coming of the Europeans.

The caravaneers used cowries and cloth as trade currency and in some cases even bartered one type of commodity for another. Cowries appear to have been the chief currency used and came close to being used for all purposes. Evidence for the use of cloth as currency comes from Barth and Marc. Barth met a trader who had

> ... a good quantity of the gabaga, or cotton strips, of Mosi with him, which form the staple currency in the whole tract of country from Libta to Timbuktu, ten Dr'a being reckoned equal to one hundred shells. (Barth 1859 : III, 198)

The big rolls of cotton cloth which Marc saw being loaded by Mossi caravaneers were said by them to serve the purpose of buying food ("They are for eating") in regions where cloth was the necessary currency (Marc 1909 : 172 f.n.). The traders apparently resorted to barter whenever and wherever they could or when their currency was in short supply. This appears to have been the case when Binger visited the Mossi in 1888. Cowries were then in short supply and the people were using slaves, valued at 50,000 to 65,000 cowries apiece, to obtain goods. Horses could be bought for as many as two or four slaves apiece. Traders apparently kept the cowry equivalence in mind when using other commodities to barter with, but we cannot be sure of this since Binger himself, and not the traders, may have been conscious of the equivalence (Binger 1892 : II, 498).

The prices which the traders paid and received for their goods differed greatly from place to place, according to the season of the year and over a span of several years. The earliest price data are given by Barth for the 1850's:

> As regards Selga [Salaga], the district to which the Hausa traders go for their supply of this article, three points are considered essential to the business of the Kola trade; first, that the people of Mosi bring their asses; secondly, that the Tonawa, or natives of Asanti, bring the nut in sufficient quantities; and thirdly, that the state of the road is such as not to prevent the Hausa people from arriving. If one of these conditions is wanting, the trade is not flourishing. The price of the asses rises with the cheapness of the guro [kola nut]. The average price of an ass in the market of Selga is 15,000 [cowry] Shell: While in Hausa the general price does not exceed 5,000. But the fataki, or native traders, take only as many asses with them from Hausa as are necessary for transporting their luggage, as the toll, or

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fitto, levied upon each ass by the petty chiefs on the road is very considerable. From 5,000 to 6,000 guro, or kola nuts, constitute an assload.

Selga, the market place for this important article, being, it appears, a most miserable town, where even water is very scarce and can only be purchased at an exorbitant price, the merchants always manage to make their stay here as short as possible, awaiting the proper season in Yendi, a town said to be as large as Timbuktu, or in Kulfela, the great market place of Mosi; and they are especially obliged to wait in case they arrive at the beginning of the rainy season, there being no kola nuts before the latter part of the Kharif. The price of this nut in Timbuktu varies from 20 to 100 shells each, and it always constitutes a luxury; so that, even on great festivals, alms consisting of this article are distributed by the rich people of the town. (Barth 1859 : II, 364)

The other data we have on prices paid for goods come from the period between 1890 and 1910, at which time French francs had been introduced. At this time the official value of one franc was 1,000 cowries. Around 1904, a trader paid about 50 francs or 50,000 cowries for a head of cattle in Mossi country and sold it for about double the price at Salaga. With the proceeds of this transaction he bought kola nuts at the rate of one franc or 100 cowries per hundred. Thus with the sale of one cow a trader could obtain 10,000 kolas, these being valued at about 500 francs or 500,000 cowries in Mossi country and at 20 or 200 cowries each at Sarfere and Timbuktu (Marc 1909 : 173–4). At Timbuktu about this same period, 1895, traders could buy salt at about 30 francs for a slab weighing between 60 and 100 pounds and sell it for 45 francs at Sarafere, for 60 francs at Djenne, for between 70 and 80 francs at San, and "thus progressively more until they reached Mossi country" (Dubois 1899 : 276). In 1910, Mossi traders bought cattle for about 40 to 100 francs, horses for about 90 francs, donkeys for 25 francs, and so on, and sold these animals in Salaga for three times the prices. There they bought kolas at 2 Fr. 50 per thousand, and sold them at 20 per thousand at Leo on the Mossi border, 35 francs per thousand at Wagadougou, 50 francs at Wahigouya, 60 francs at Saravere, and 100 francs per thousand at Timbuktu. Here these traders bought bars of salt weighing about 75 pounds for between 10 and 12 francs a piece, and sold them for between 40 to 60 francs at Wahigouya, and for from 80 to 100 francs a piece at Dedougou and points as far down as Wagadougou (Tauxier 1917 : 221).

Not all the profit from this trade went into the pockets of the traders. We have the report of Binger that the chiefs, besides commandering the goods at less than one-hundredth their purchase price, received taxes on each caravan which passed through their territory.

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territory. This report is substantiated by Barth. Marc adds that the caravaneers had

> . . . a considerable amount of incidental expenses. Ten thousand kolas called for two asses or four porters for whom it was necessary to provide food during close to two months. Formerly there had been a certain number of local exactions to pay each time that the caravans crossed a new country. Now there are taxes on the caravans in the Gold Coast and also in French territory. It is also necessary to pay for ferryman who transports the livestock across the Volta [River]. There are risks, and occasionally cattle, fatigued by the trip, arrive in such bad shape that they are sold more cheaply than they had cost. Finally, the realization of profits is often difficult, the kola market being, in the commercial centers of the Mossi, subject to considerable fluctuations at the time when the caravans return. (Marc 1909 : 174)[7]

Sometimes the caravaneers made extensive use of middlemen and did not realize all the profits. Marc, who was stationed at the customs post at Leo on the Mossi border with the Gold Coast, wrote:

> The livestock is bought upon arrival by interpreter-brokers, middlemen between the butchers and the meat merchants, to whom the caravaneers are practically forced to resort. These men buy all the kola nuts brought by the forest natives, and control the market prices . . . These interpreter-brokers apparently speculate on livestock in a most curious way. They have scouts who go out to meet the caravans, sometimes two days' march to the north. These scouts attempt to alarm the travellers with tendentious remarks, until they are willing to cede their herds at a low price. Some times, at the height of the business season—that is, in January and February—the livestock prices may fluctuate by one hundred per cent within a few weeks. The Mande-Dioula vie in eloquence, the Yarse and Mossi in politeness, the Hausa in friendliness. In reality, there is here, an embryonic trading center, a veritable stock exchange, using extensively indigenous methods. ((Marc 1909 : 173)

According to most reports, all the larger market centers of Mossi country were like this.

Caravan centers, like all the lesser market centers in Mossi country, provided merchants not only with trading opportunities but also with occasions for conviviality after hectic days of travel. At Dakay south of Wagadougou, livestock traders found musicians, singers, and the most beautiful dancers in the country. And according to Marc, during the whole caravan season the market was abundantly furnished with beer (Marc 1909 : 175). But if the Mossi enjoyed themselves at

(7) Tauxier (1912 : 539) states that each porter was paid 35 francs for the thirty-five days of travels or at the rate of one franc per day. In addition a caravaneer spent about 300 cowries a day on food for each of his bearers.

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to be sold the article at a lower price. The result is that the pace of commerce in a Mossi market is somewhat relaxed, but the lack of intense competition prevents a great deal of hositility and quarreling among the market people.

The amount of small trading which takes place in a Mossi market is fantastic, so much so that one gains the impression that some people trade simply for the sake of trading. Everyone tries to get money so that he or she can buy some desired object, but it is impossible for one to obtain a clear idea of what kind of profit, if any, people make from their commerce. In fact, the idea of a profit does not seem to be important when people are selling their own products. Most people only think about profit when they buy things to resell—whether these things are of African or European manufacture. This, incidentally, is one of the reasons why the prices of foodstuffs are about 10 per cent lower in the country districts than at Wagadougou, and concommitently, why imported products are 10 to 20 per cent higher in the rural districts than at Wagadougou where they are bought. When a woman takes such products as cotton, beans or millet to market, she may gross about 100 francs in the course of the day. But out of this she may give a few francs to her husband to buy kola nuts, a few francs to her daughter to buy a plastic necklace, and spend the rest for a cotton skirt, a piece of meat and condiments for her sauces. Men whose wives do not bring many goods to market must usually give them about 100 francs to spend on the various products the family needs. There are no official restrictions on the kinds of goods which may or may not be sold in the Mossi markets. In pre-European times slaves and eunuchs were the common stock-in-trade of the major markets and of some of the smaller ones as well. The only active supervision that existed and still exists concerns the butchering of meat. Every person who sells meat in the market must exhibit the skin of the butchered animal in a public place so that there will be no question as to the ownership of the animal. If the meat in question is the remains of a cow killed and half-eaten by a lion, then the village or district chief must be notified before the meat enters the market. The person in charge of this task used to be, and often still is, a man called the Kos Naba, a kind of sales chief. He also formerly doubled as a tax collector for the rulers and chiefs. Another official, the Raga Naba, where he still exists, is more concerned with protecting the lives and property of the people who trade at the markets, but he also supervises the sale of some commodities there and formerly also collected taxes for his superior.

In pre-European times, every important Mossi prince and district chief had the counterpart of a Kos Naba and Raga Naba, to collect taxes in their markets.

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taxes in their markets. The French abolished both of these offices when they took over the country, because they looked upon them as purely exploitative rather than regulatory agents. But like so many other Mossi political institutions which the French have "abolished," the Kos Naga and Raga Naba persist in many of the districts, and perhaps even in such large centers as Wagadougou. These officials persist because one of the basic assumptions of the Mossi is that everything must have a "chief." They believe that even the animals in the bush have chiefs, and if men, too, did not have chiefs then social life would be chaos. Thus, in the rural areas many or most district chiefs have retained their market officials even though the roles of these officials have become highly attenuated and so secretive that their existence is often denied.

Taxes collected at the market places played an important part in supporting the traditional political hierarchy of the Mossi people. The Kos Naba collected 250 cowries in taxes for every beef cattle slaughtered at the market and took their humps and gave them to a palace official called the Nemdo Naba (meat chief) for distribution in the royal household. He also collected 250 cowries on every cow sold there, but did not usually tax goats and sheep. In lieu of this he occasionally took a head or two of these animals from each herd that passed through the market and sent them to the palace kitchens. Donkeys were also taxed at the rate of 200 cowries per head sold in the market. Horses sold to the nobility were not taxed, but those exported were taxed about 300 cowries.

The Raga Naba collected the taxes on other commodities sold at market. Cotton weavers paid him taxes according to the size of their bolts of cloth, and cotton producers paid as much as 20 cowries on especially large sales of their raw produce. The tailors and dyers paid no fixed tax on their wares, but were asked to send clothing to the palace. Every donkey- or ox-load of salt which entered the market place was assessed a tax of 300 cowries. The smiths were not taxed in cowries, but had to supply the wives of the Moro Naba with hoes and the palace personnel with arrowheads, spearpoints and iron clubs. The jewelers also sent bracelets as presents to the ruler. There were no fixed taxes on cereals, vegetables and cooked food sold at market, but each day the Raga Naba, accompanied by several pages or retainers carrying baskets, went from vendor to vendor taking several calabashfuls of their produce for use in the palace. In addition, the vendors of cooked food had to feed the young grooms of the Moro Naba who were not regularly fed by the palace household. The beer sellers, too, while they were not assessed taxes, contributed a good percentage of their beverage to palace and market personnel who demanded the

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customary "taste" with greater frequency and freedom than did ordinary buyers. But the most valuable tax collected by the Raga Naba was on the sale of slaves, whose buyers paid a tax of 1,000 cowries per head.

There is some evidence, mainly from Europeans, that the Mossi occasionally may have found the market taxes prohibitive. Binger reports that during his visit to the Mossi in 1888, the high taxes exacted by the Moro Naba were "one of the causes which placed Wagadougou in second place [as a market town] and which made Mane the commercial capital of Mossi country" (Binger 1892 : 467). Binger, himself, was caught in the institutionalized gift system and wrote sarcastically: "The day of the market [at Wagadougou] the receipts are good. People bring every-thing to the palace including millet as well as hoes or peanuts, and everything is accepted. *All this giving is left to the generosity of the customers . . .*" (Binger 1892 : 465) (his italics). Even so, one cannot be sure that the Mossi felt the same way about paying taxes to their rulers as Binger felt. There is, incidentally, always an air of mutual recriminations among the Mossi and their rulers about the level of reciprocation between them. The people admit that the chiefs are indispensable; yet they complain that they are greedy—they "eat" too much. The chiefs insist that it is difficult to rule a territory and complain that the people are ungrateful.

SOCIAL AND RITUAL ASPECTS OF THE MARKETPLACE

Although the offices of Kos Naba and Raga Naba have been abolished officially, these officials still exist in many Mossi districts, and even when they do not exist, some men acting in their stead appropriate commodities in the markets for the chiefs. Furthermore, the *nakomce* (plural of *nabiga*—chief's child) or nobles still wander about the market places taking handfuls of kola nuts, peanuts and everything they need without the people becoming angry or complaining to the French about it. Once when I visited a market in the company of a *nabiga*, the local Raga Naba came up to where we were buying meat and indicated to the butcher that one of his customers was a *nabiga* and that he should treat him accordingly. It is not because of ignorance that the market people continue to grant these privileges to the nobles and the chiefs, but rather because they believe that only the market officials, and not the Europeans, can take care of the markets.

One of the most important tasks of the Raga Naba (or in the absence of this official, the Kos Naba) is to propitiate the *tengkouga* in the market place, or supervise the sacrifices which the *tengsobas* make to them. The task of the market spirits is believed to be so difficult—